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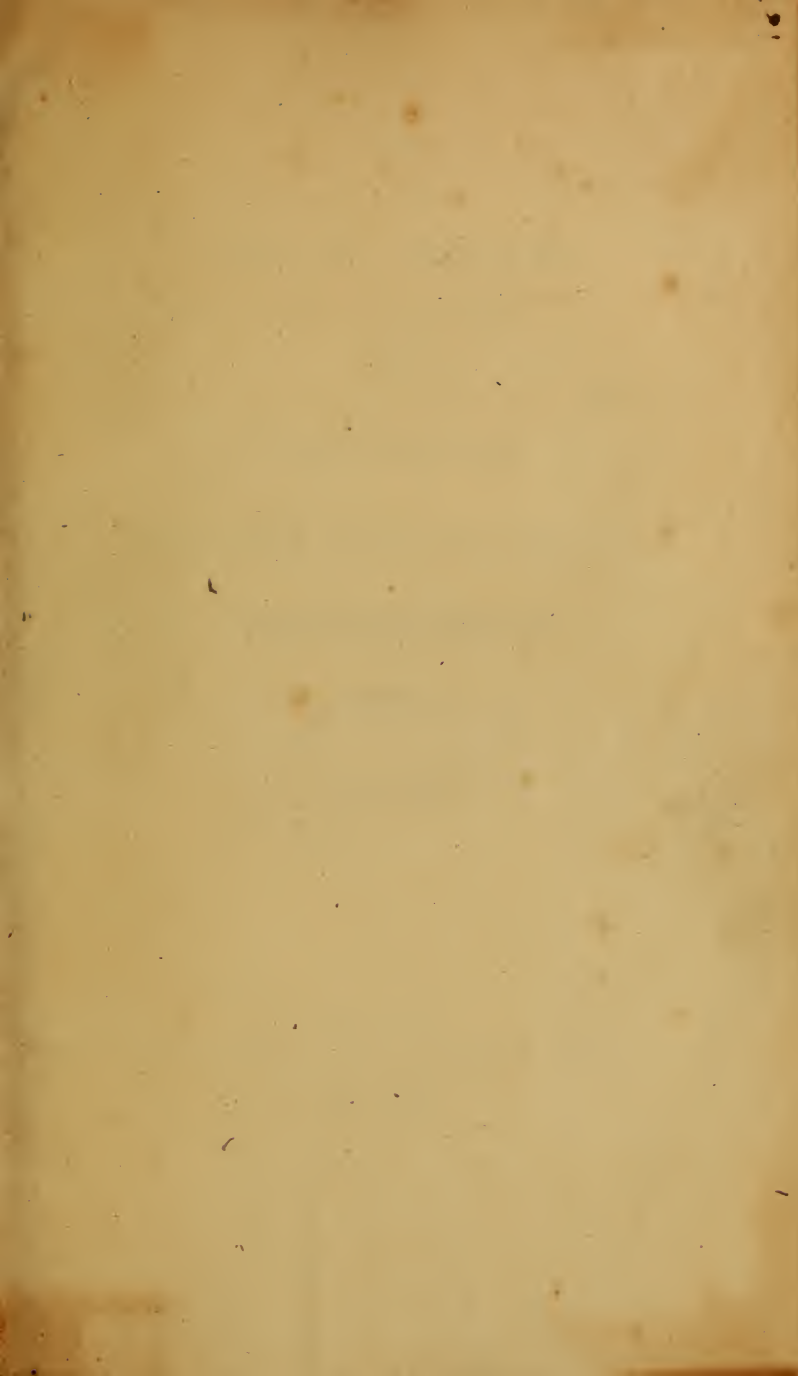
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1801

THE SECTARIAN.

VOL. I.

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THE

SECTARIAN;

OR,

THE CHURCH

AND THE MEETING-HOUSE.

By Andrew Picken.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE SECTARIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORTUNE OF A WANDERER.

ON a shady sequestered road, not far from the coast, in the south of England, upon a warm evening in September, journeyed a middle-aged, hale gentleman on horseback, at an easy pace, without any attendant. His dress consisted of a long-bodied blue frock, neither plain like that of a civilian squire, nor trimmed at all in the style which an officer, active or retired, would be likely to fancy. Ribbed small-clothes, as heavy as would be required in December, clothed his nether man, and hessian morocco boots, as light

almost as a glove, fitted with gentlemanly neatness his well-formed limbs. Still, scarce an article on his person could be said to be in the fashion. He wore a military stock round his neck, and had the brown sunburnt countenance which reminded one of an "old Indian," and a man of war too; yet his hat was not set on his head in the style that an officer loves to plant his "crown." His appearance, though evidently that of a gentleman, was odd and inconsistent: he was powdered, but it was with the dust of the road; and the general gravity or contemplative look, borne on his rough intelligent physiognomy, was occasionally lightened by an expression of joyous self-satisfaction, if not humour, that curled up the sides of his mouth, or animated his restless black eyes. He seemed to awake on a sudden out of his musing, upon perceiving that the shadows of the tall trees on the slope on his left, and immediately near him, crossed his path from the contrary side of the road to what they had

done an hour or two before; and on lifting up his eyes upon the country round, he missed, to his astonishment, the distant hills he had long thought himself approaching a little to his right, and found they appeared to recede behind him.

“Humph!—what is this?” he began to exclaim to himself: “where am I? North and south have changed places. The hills stretch away far to the rear. Whew! I am astray, that’s flat. ‘The hireling watcheth the shadow,’ says the man of Uzz; an idle fool like myself that hireling must have been. Is it the shadows of those towering chestnuts that sweep along in open column up the heights, there, on my left, that have decoyed me from my line of march; or is it the rich green slopes and the sweet country perfume of this glorious English verdure that have tempted me astray? Humph!—’pon my honour, I believe I am not a jot less a fool than when I was in my sixteenth summer. Even now I could find in my heart to turn my

horse up that charming slope, then tie him to a tree, and forthwith plant myself on the bank of moss by the edge of the brook in the hollow, and set myself to moralize, like Jaques or the other fool, until the going down of the sun; picking up acquaintance with the blackbird or the curlew (bating that the rheumatism would be apt to catch me on the bank, and together with hunger would begin to pinch me, I fear, like Caliban's tormentors). Humph! a wandering fool—not a house near:—yonder steeple 'pointing to heaven,' in the distance, must be ten miles off. Well; unless on this secluded road the blackbird can instruct me in language more intelligible than his rich warble, I may have a chance of taking up my quarters in some contented cottage, or perhaps under a tree, for the night, without my supper, as I have done aforetime, when this warm sunshine shall have passed into gloom, and my seductive shadows shall flee away.

“ But, after all, why should I hurry away from

this spot, before the gleaming sun-light, that dwells in yellow-green on the meadows, and glances through the trees on the left, shall have dipped behind the obscurities of the distant woodland?—and why should I be tired of my own company, or rather the company of the trees, and the meadows, and the groves, and the birds that sing in the solitudes? for surely the spirit of nature has been upon me. I have rambled all day through this secluded country—a country which is too good to be the dwelling-place of the unpoetical and mercenary spirits of trading England, and worthy to be

‘ The soft retreat of gods, when gods make love.’

“ But this will not do! I must do justice to my horse, if I am careless of myself—so, come, Anthony!” he continued, patting the neck of the animal, “ on, on, and let us see where this straying adventure will end.”

The horse, for anything that appears to the

contrary, understood every word that his eccentric master addressed to him; for without the application of either whip or spur, he set off at a brisk trot with as much spirit as if he had just taken the road. Still, after half an hour's riding, nothing appeared but a random farm-house, at long intervals, standing at a distance from the road, solitary and reserved; reminding our traveller of the repulsive peculiarity of the English character. The trot of the equestrian was now urged to a smart canter, almost a gallop; still nothing was to be seen. "Away we go, Anthony!" exclaimed the traveller, urging his horse. "Sleep under a tree, forsooth! A pretty *solitaire* I should make, for all my raving about

‘ ——— Mildly pleasing solitude,

Companion of the wise and good.’

I don't know what this galloping gaily is, if it is not a perfect hunt after society and for sociality, after all; a regular flight from the weary wilds, and Pan, and all the rest, and the birds of the

air, and all the worthy members of Nebuchadnezzar's society."

By the time the traveller had cantered and soliloquized another fifteen minutes, he observed between two rising grounds which could not be called hills, partial and wavering wreaths of smoke swimming up from the foliage which enriched and almost covered the objects in the hollow; and soon after, the tower of a village church started out in the centre; after which gradually appeared the irregular forms of human habitations, indicating a village, hid in a situation so sequestered, and looking so romantic, that our equestrian now slackened his rein, and, felicitating himself on discovering a haunt of civilization so much to his taste, began like any other vague adventurer to congratulate himself on his good fortune, and to indulge again his disposition to reverie.

The road now mounted a little, and a sudden

turning brought a tolerable view of the village, almost straight before him.

“ Now,” exclaimed he; “ now, there it is!” as if he had discovered a new island in the Pacific. “ Well, that is really beautiful! that pleases me much! I *do* delight again to contemplate a genuine English village, spreading itself out in habitations of quiet and content, the dear domiciles of our simple population, entwined and almost hidden under a sort of fraternal vegetation, sometimes growing luxuriantly wild, and sometimes grotesquely shaped, to please the taste of the honest countryman; the whole gathered round and sitting under the sanctifying shadow of its venerable temple of worship, which rises solemnly in the midst, and, together with its silent and green churchyard, studded with white monuments for the dead, and mouldering emblem of rotting mortality, seems to unite the long past with the passing present, to make ge-

neration tell her moral tale to generation, and mixes the holy poetics of religion, and the still small voice of the departed, with the simple notions and quiet musings of village life. I am delighted, after all, in having strayed from the common hurrying road of eternal whirling and bustle; to have got out of reach of the deafening buzz of steam and stage racing to and fro, and the everlasting worrying and conflicting of high and low ambitions; and, in short, in having caught in this romantic corner of England a village apparently of the olden fashion, where I could almost fancy Will Shakspeare still glowing with the poetical conceptions or strange creations of some *Midsummer Night's Dream*; or where even poor, amiable, nervous Cowper, might feed his hares out of his hand without molestation."

While continuing to muse in this manner, the attention of our traveller was attracted to the irregular towers of an ancient mansion, which peered over the trees to his right, in the midst

of extensive and thickly-wooded pleasure grounds, that spread onwards towards the village. As he rode on, he observed before him an elderly gentleman, who seemed to survey him with curious attention.

“An impudent old fellow this,” thought he, “or perhaps merely fashionable—an old lord, no doubt. The Lord deliver me! but I’m not unlike a wild beast, or some other curiosity, after all, I believe,” he observed, looking down on his dusty dress. “A respectable-looking old gentleman still, I think; a genuine English squire or baron; good-humoured and open, venerable like a patriarch: what if I address him? I will, by Jove! why not? ‘I also am a man!’ who knows what it may lead to? The dearest friends I have had in life, I have lighted upon by mere chance, or they have been left quite in my way, like the lucky horseshoe of the rustic; and so, having been duly taken up by me, and made my own, have brought me much good fortune and happiness.”

Agreeably to this very social theory of his own experience, our traveller halted, and addressed the old gentleman with an inquiry what road he was upon, and the name of the village before him. "For," said he, "I find I have strayed from the road to Standwich, on which I was originally travelling, and have quite lost my way, being a stranger in this part of the country."

"The name of the village beneath, sir, is Oldwood," answered the gentleman: "it is but little frequented by strangers, being situated out of the range of any of the great roads, and can hardly boast of an inn suitable for a traveller accustomed to——" and he seemed to check himself.

"Your communication is exceedingly polite, sir; and as there is an inn in yonder village of some kind, wherein I may rest myself and my beast, a straying traveller, who has been so heedless as to lose himself, has little right to complain."

“It may be useful to warn you, however, sir,” rejoined the old gentleman, “that you will find but very poor fare at the Clynch’s Arms; for the landlord and his family are mere farmers.”

“Sir, I have to thank you much for your information; but although I may say I can enjoy good things sufficiently, and agreeable society still more,” added the traveller, smiling, “yet I think I shall find myself but little at a loss with the wholesome rustic entertainment which I may chance to find in a decent village-inn in England: and allow me to say, sir, since you are pleased to give me warning as to the fare I may expect, that I have in my time passed the night in less comfortable quarters than I am likely to find in the inn of the pretty village before me.” So saying, he slowly turned round his horse’s head towards the village, as somewhat reluctantly parting from the aged gentleman.

“You say you are a stranger, sir, if I mistake

not?" said the latter, willing to detain the traveller.

"Entirely so, sir."

"Pardon me for inquiring in my turn; but may I ask if you are a stranger in England, sir?"

"England is my country, sir; but twenty years and more have I been absent in foreign parts. I have returned but a short time, and you may believe me I am a little newfangled about it, on travelling through it and exploring it for my own satisfaction again."

"These twenty years and more," said the old gentleman, "have I lived 'at home at ease,' as the song has it—chiefly on this out-of-the-world estate of mine; and—— But in truth, sir, I think it somewhat hard if our English hospitality is so run out in these latter days, that a stranger, with the outward bearing of a gentleman, may not partake of our evening meal, and have rest and refreshment on his way as he passes our gates.

You will perceive, sir, that I am somewhat of the old school ; but I really don't know why I should allow you to go to a paltry village inn for a resting-place, if you will do me the honour to accompany me to the old mansion above."

"An invitation so frankly given, sir, ought to be as frankly and most thankfully accepted," said the equestrian, bowing ; and he seemed to consider for a moment what further acknowledgement to express ; when the old gentleman, waving his hand, pulled out a small silver whistle, that hung by a ribbon round his neck, and blew it. A young man, who seemed to be his gamekeeper, soon made his appearance, to whom he gave orders to take charge of the stranger's horse, and a small valise, with which he usually travelled ; and having given him entrance to the grounds by a rustic gate in the wall near them, the two gentlemen proceeded down an avenue towards the mansion.

There was something so unexpected to both

in this rencontre, that they seemed equally to feel at a loss in what terms to continue the conversation. At length the old gentleman, from feelings of hospitality, began, by saying,

“ We have nearly half a mile to walk to the Hall you see before you, sir : I hope your proceeding thither on foot will not fatigue you after your ride.”

“ I am still able to walk many times the distance on grounds of so much beauty, sir, and there is to me something exceedingly picturesque in the mansion or castle from this point.”

“ You have been living abroad, sir, of late, I presume ?”

“ I have, sir, been over good part of the continent, living for a time here and there as I listed—but great part of my time, these last twenty years, has been spent in India.”

“ In India ? indeed ! Many of my early friends have gone to India : some are dead : some have lost their health : some are ruined and become regardless : some, I’m told, have made their for-

tunes, and are duly discontented—and thus the world wags.”

“Just so—just so. ‘As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.’”

The old gentleman gave the stranger a hasty look, which interrupted him, and said with some quickness,

“You know that’s the church service, sir?”

“Is it, sir?” said the traveller, feigning ignorance, and slightly resenting the old gentleman’s interruption; and they both seemed to reconnoitre each other for a moment, as, curious to know each other’s character. The old gentleman, however, spoke first—

“I believe I am entitled to ask your pardon, sir, if any thing I said implied a check on your entire freedom of speech; an Englishman’s privilege, which I claim for myself, and am anxious you should use with the utmost frankness while I have the honour of your company, for otherwise we shall be mere actors, deceitful and deceiving one another. In respect of my remark on your

quotation, perhaps I am, in the true John Bull character, unreasonably jealous of any thing that might look like profanity—although I have to confess I am not so *very* religious neither,” he added, musingly.

“I am glad of that,” said the traveller.

“Are you, sir?—Well—ha! ha!—but I must not infringe on your liberty of speech;”—and they again took a glance at each other.

“I ought, in return, sir, to say,” said the traveller, “that I should be very unfit to ramble throughout the world and mix with men of all sorts of opinions, if I took offence at your slight interruption, when I used a quotation, the profanity of which, or otherwise, like most questions of the kind, is matter of such vague opinion, that hardly any two men can be found to agree upon the matter, unless bribed by considerations of interest, which have, as we know, a wonderful effect upon men’s opinions, political and religious. But what took me, I confess, a little by surprise

was, to hear a man of sense, and the owner of this noble estate, offer, in general conversation, an observation at all religious, or implying censure *for opinions*, which all jealous obtrusion of religious predilections does. You see, sir, I avail myself of your sentiments in permission of liberty of speech, for I hold that no man has the prescriptive liberty of obtruding his sentiments to the offence of others. But since you were yourself the first to notice what was to me unexpected, I beg to account for being somewhat startled at it, by remarking, that I may myself be prejudiced; for, in the society in which I have happened to live on the continent, and even in England, it seems to be considered incompatible with politeness to ‘talk religion’ at all in company. But you seem to see the matter in its true light yourself, from your amusing observation upon the John Bull character, of which, in some of its phases, I begin to suspect my own ignorance.”

“I cordially agree with you, sir, though it may

be only from self-love. I cannot pretend to have seen so much of the world as you have evidently done, nor do my observations reach much beyond my own neighbourhood; but I have been so deafened of late by the unceasing gabble of religious schisms in the village, and so plagued by the intrusion of local zeal, that whenever a man uses a religious phrase, I imagine he is about to begin a fierce debate with me on matters of faith."

"Well, sir," rejoined the traveller, "although I am an indulgent student of human nature, I confess I have little either of taste or patience for folly passing under the name of religion, and I feel it particularly irksome amidst this glorious scenery. What a noble mansion! The gothic portico, sir, and the adjoining wing seem to have been lately built. I must have a particular inspection of the arms over the entrance when we get near. And now, sir, as I am a stranger, and somewhat of an intruder, allow me to—" But he still fumbled in his pocket for his card-case—"I

am ashamed to make use of a card with you. There is something ceremonious and effeminate in it."

"Mr. Jarman!" said the old gentleman, reading the card presented to him.

"Yes, sir. In India, where I had the honour of holding his majesty's commission of the rank of colonel, I was, of course, colonel Jarman; but having sold out (for in truth the military life, though sufficiently idle, was too prescribed and orderly for my rambling humour, and too indolent and stately for my fidgety habits), I am now, if you please, plain James Jarman, esquire, your grateful guest *à présent*; for although, my good sir, these are noble quarters for a disbanded soldier, yet, as corporal Trim says, 'We are here to-day and gone to-morrow'—God help us!"

"Well," thought the old gentleman, "this is the oddest man I have met for many years, yet I like him much, and I should know his face. Jarman, Jarman!" he continued, reading the card,

and looking in his guest's face, "It cannot be possible!" He paused. At length, in a doubtful tone, he said, "Have you no recollection of me?"

"Lord, sir! to be sure I have," said the traveller; "and I have been thinking so from the first; but it looked so like *making acquaintance*—and then I cannot for my life—one sees so many faces."

"I must certainly be much altered, but one cannot expect to be always young. Try to remember a certain electioneering affair in Herefordshire, in which you and your father bore a conspicuous part, about the time of the French revolution."

'Mr. Orton! is it possible I have once more the pleasure of meeting you?" said he, shaking the old gentleman heartily by the hand.

"How strange it is that I should not know you at first! now you remind me of old times."

After more inquiries and congratulations, the gentlemen proceeded on towards the mansion.

“I need not say, Mr. Jarman,” continued the squire, “that you are most welcome to Orton Hall, for that is the name of the pile of buildings before us, whose *constitution*, as the comparison seems to be popular, has been patched up from time to time by my ancestors into the miscellaneous mass you see, it having been several centuries in the family; and I do hope to be able to induce you to make the old Hall your home for a longer period than you at present calculate.”

“To tell you the truth, sir, I never calculate at all, on my conduct, or rather my movements, in the future tense; nor am I guilty of paying compliments by anticipation, which your friendly speech would almost provoke; but I feel myself betrayed into a compliment, either to nature or art, or both, which seem united to form this paradise. How delightfully these different objects before us are laid out! If I quarter in your romantic mansion, sir, I shall forthwith get on intimate terms with every ancient tree on your

estate, wandering among your woods like a gipsy or deer-stealer."

"So—so! fair and softly, sir. But yours, after all, is a sort of enthusiasm that I can sympathize with; but your admiration of the arrangement of my grounds amounts only to this, that your taste agrees with my own, which, like an agreement in opinion, is flattering enough to a man who has a rustic distrust of himself. Let us however take breath for a moment when we have turned the angle of this shrubbery."

The gentlemen had now arrived near the margin of a winding lake, skirted on one side by a dark plantation, which extended some distance from the mansion, and supplied the stream which passed the neighbouring village. It was bordered in many places by rushes and water-lilies, which grew up with natural carelessness on its surface. The banks were altogether irregular, and in several places rose to some height, with here and

there projecting rocks crowned with hip-briar and broom shrubs. The only object in this delicious spot, where art had added an embellishment, was a marble figure of a wood-nymph undressing to bathe, which stood forward on a natural rock, at the point where the plantation projected into the lake; and as, through the trees in this peninsula, the red rays of the sinking sun now shone gloriously, Mr. Jarman broke forth into exclamations of admiration, which amused and flattered the proprietor. The ideas of fays and fairies and their haunts, and so forth, are in imaginative minds a very natural association with a scene of this sort; but it seemed to our traveller, at his period of life, as if the place were designed for the favourite resort of beings of more earthly mould, and more intense passions, than any mere creations of imagination.

But he was not yet aware that these very banks, and woods, and streams; had been the

happy haunts, a few years before, of a pair whose union appeared to be just at hand, and whom he might well envy ; but to whose persons or story he was as yet a stranger.

CHAPTER II.

COUNTRY PEOPLE.

THE mansion of Orton Hall, into which the owner was about to introduce his new friend, was an ancient irregular building, or rather pile of buildings, as formerly said. The greater part was of the tall-turreted and small-windowed style of architecture prevalent about Elizabeth's time: a large round tower at the further wing was of much older date; and a massy gothic entrance, supported by finely formed pillars, and surmounted by the family arms, had been added by the ancestor of the present proprietor, in a style that harmonized happily both with the ancient building and with a projecting wing added by the present owner. The pleasure-grounds ascended gradually at the rear of the

mansion, and were crowned with thick wood, now diversified and imbrowned with the colouring of autumn; and, rising near the extremity of the height, appeared beneath the wooded ridge, the fanciful turrets of a range of buildings, which served for outhouses and other purposes.

The old gentleman led the way, and entered, not by the gothic passage through the hall, but by a small door in the building near the great tower, apologizing, as he mounted an ancient stone stair, to Mr. Jarman, who followed him; by observing, that, as an Englishman was a man of habit, he had acquired, he knew not how, the habit of taking this direct rout to a favourite room, in which he usually sat, to enjoy the prospect that was most to his taste in the surrounding landscape, and where his family usually joined him to supper. He led the way into a remarkably elegant, old-fashioned apartment, furnished in the massy style of a century ago; the mantelpiece and panels richly carved in

black oak, and the wall hung, as usual, with portraits of frowning figures of the olden time, interspersed with those of noble dames, in the flowing draperies so inimitably preserved to us by the artists of the day. The prospect from the projecting windows was rich and varied; with that luxuriant, but not striking beauty, which is the characteristic of English scenery. The tower of the ancient abbey of Oldwood was now sinking along with more distant objects into the gray obscurity of deepening twilight. The gentlemen enjoyed the evening scene for a few minutes in involuntary silence, until the servant entering with lights, shut out the last glimpse of day; and they sat down to their conversation.

The discourse was chiefly respecting India and the continent of Europe, in which Mr. Jarman had lived, or through which he had travelled; and he delighted the old gentleman by giving much information concerning various friends whom the latter had known in early life;

but when, in the course of their interchange of anecdote and inquiry, they came to revert to old tales of their respective fathers, who had been intimate friends; and called to mind old stories of the German wars, in which they had fought together, nothing could exceed their happiness; particularly the pleasure of Mr. Orton, who, shaking hands with his friend at every new discovery, wondered and lamented that they should both have lived so long in the world without ever having the fortune to meet before this night, in which, by the chances which occur to a straying man, they were now conversing. At length, in the first pause of the conversation, Mr. Orton somewhat bluntly and abruptly said,

“ Didn’t you say you were a bachelor, Mr. Jarman ?”

“ A home question; rather a home question, my dear sir; which, I confess, I feel a sort of shame in answering. Would not an unmarried lady of five and forty (for that’s the valuation of age which I choose to put upon myself) feel

rather awkward, and look either simple or pettish, if you were so suddenly to ‘pop the question,’ and say the same thing as, ‘Are you not, madam, an old maid?’ I fancy she would; and I think your query to me is not much different. But I must, I presume, give you, as the diplomatists say, ‘a categorical answer.’ So, Mr. Orton, *I am* an old bachelor; though I am sure I never intended to be one: but as Dr. Young says, and the schoolboys repeat,

‘At thirty man suspects himself a fool;

Knows it at forty,’ &c.

But I knew it in respect of wiving five or six years sooner; which, you’ll admit, is an astonishing precocity of knowledge: although indeed a rambler like myself runs wilfully away from love, and all that sort of thing, for the best part of his life. *I am* an oldish bachelor; but ‘while there’s life there’s hope,’ my good friend: don’t you think so?”

Mr. Orton laughed heartily, and replied:

“ Now, positively, you have scattered my serious thoughts, and sent adrift the sentimentality I was in danger of inflicting upon you ; for, hearing music by some of the ladies, during the pause in our chat, I was about to give you some account of them before they appeared at supper ; but you will see them in a few minutes yourself, and probably your own penetration will give you a more orthodox opinion respecting them than the partial character which a father would give of his daughter, or a husband of his wife ; for there are none but women beside myself of the family at home at present, and one is my niece on a visit.”

“ My dear sir,” said the colonel, hastily, “ I hope you have not a design upon my bachelorship already. I am quite alarmed !”

“ Dismiss your fears, good sir ; you are an old soldier, and ought not to *show* cowardice, but to be more collected at the mention of a petticoat. But what I am about to say is on a

family subject, of which it is necessary you should be in possession, that as a man of sense, although a bachelor, you may enter a little into my feelings, as my friend and guest ; for although I like the wit that you sort of gentlemen are apt to sport, I know it to be of a disappointed sour-grape kind, after all. However, I must be allowed to inform you something respecting my daughter—my only daughter ! But you shall see her—you shall see her presently ; and her intended husband, a fine youth, is expected home daily, and my eldest son along with him ; and a marriage will soon take place. You are come to the Hall at a most interesting time, sir.”

“ I am most happy that I have the good fortune to be your visiter at such a period. But you talk with peculiar earnestness about your daughter ; I hope all is as you could wish, and that you approve of the match ; and—”

“ I do, sir, I do ;—that is, as far as I know. But in alluding to your being a bachelor, Mr.

Jarman—I beg your pardon—but I merely would say, that you cannot form an idea of the strength of sentiment, the more than parental affection, which I have for the favourite child whom I shall now introduce to you, nor of the interest which her approaching marriage and future happiness gives me. Various circumstances, some of them, perhaps, peculiar to my own character, have contributed to make me set my heart upon that girl ever since she was an infant, more than upon my other children; and now the parting with her, or at least the partial loss of her society, and solicitude for her future wellbeing, under the roof of one with whose character as a man I am as yet unacquainted, fills me, when I consider her extremely sensitive mind and high feelings, with many thoughts and even apprehensions respecting her, that you will no doubt consider weakness, as perhaps it really is. But I hear the voices of the ladies in the passage. Pray ex-

cuse the feelings of an old man, too happy in his children."

The door was now opened, and three ladies entered: first, an elderly and plainly dressed matron; namely, Mrs. Orton, who received the stranger (who was announced as a friend from abroad), with an unaffected cordiality of manner, which won at once the good opinion of their guest. But, in presenting his daughter next, the old gentleman took her by the hand with an expression of such doting affection, and spoke of her again with so proud and happy an air, that Mr. Jarman, who was not prepared to meet in England with much other love besides the love of money and of a man's own opinion, was quite affected with what he witnessed: for, from his observations of English opinions and feelings, and by comparing them with those of some of the nations on the continent, where he had resided, he had thought that the love of the Englishman

for his idol, money, was stronger than his love for his father, mother, sister, brother, wife, child, fame, religion, honour, or any other thing. This, as is well known, is no uncommon state of mind with bachelor gentlemen, who are past the warm-hearted and charitable greenness which “believeth all things and hopeth all things.”

It was with sentiments of this sort that Mr. Jarman sat down with this interesting and happy family: but as yet the young ladies were not in a position so that he could properly judge of *their looks*; and, to a thorough bachelor, who had all his life been looking at ladies' faces, and falling in and out of love; after the account he had of the daughter of his host, this was a matter of no small importance. When he did obtain a proper view of Miss Lydia Orton (for although no greenhorn, he was a shamefaced man, and was obliged to watch his opportunity), her face did not strike him as much to be remarked, in a country where beauty abounds so much as it does

in England : her eyes indeed, he admitted, had a deep and languishing expression ; but still he had seen as good in others of his countrywomen, and perhaps better in the warmer climates of Spain and Italy. Still, although he had a contempt for “ trifling girls,” as he was apt to call them, even allowing they were beautiful ; he soon began to determine within himself, that either *her* countenance had more than common power in giving effect to what passed in her mind, or that there did pass in *her* mind, thoughts and emotions which an old stager like himself was not in the habit of discovering every day in girls of twenty (for that was now her age) : yet this latter hypothesis he for the present thought might barely amount to a possibility, although both qualities together made actually the truth.

The features of the other young lady (Helen Spencer, her lively companion,) were no less regular, and little less beautiful : but there was between the two some degree of contrast ; for the

predominant expression of the latter's round and pretty face was that of light-hearted glee, if not of waggery and mischief; while that of Miss Orton was sedate and dignified; animated often by quick, and, as Mr. Jarman thought, passionate sentiments, which raised in him no slight degree of curiosity and interest.

When this family circle were seated and began to converse, and when their supper, "light and choice," was afterwards served, our stranger remarked, with increasing pleasure, the intense happiness they seemed to enjoy in their own society, and the heartfelt love which beamed in their countenances and flowed from their lips in every word they addressed to each other. At length his dormant gallantry was aroused, and he ventured upon the following inquiry, addressed to Miss Orton:

"I am curious to know, madam, from your own lips (if you will forgive and gratify the inquisitiveness of one who is always seeking know-

ledge, perhaps to very little purpose), if you are altogether influenced by voluntary choice in this out-o'the-world retirement of yours. Pardon me, but I am grown sceptical about so many things, that I do not always trust my own eyes and ears, and I would not even have an answer to this question from any one but yourself. *I believe* you will tell me the honest truth, madam; and that, from me, is a greater compliment than you at present think it."

"I will tell you candidly, sir," said Miss Orton, while her waggish cousin Helen held down her head, as if striving to suppress a laugh.

"A farthing for thy foolish thoughts, niece," said the old gentleman. "I think I have bid the full value for them. Thou'rt meditating some mischief, I am quite certain. Speak up, damsel; I'll take thy part."

"I was just thinking about nonsense, sir."

"What nonsense, child? It must be thy own for certain!"

“ Here ’s an unbelieving gentleman going to believe my cousin ; and here ’s my cousin going to answer a gentleman’s question *candidly*; ha, ha, ha, ha !”

“ Thou art a provoking witch, Helen,” said Miss Orton; “ but never mind her, Mr. Jarman: I will tell you the truth, and nothing but the truth, if you will lay aside your scepticism, and put a little confidence in me. Besides, I am as curious to know how people can be happy only in the heartless bustle and noise of London or Paris, as you are respecting our burying ourselves, as it is called, in the country. I assure you, sir, it is my own free choice to live at home here in this retirement, although I am not without experience of a town life; and sure I am, that whenever circumstances may require me to go where there is more variety, I shall remember, perhaps with regret, the delightful days and years which I have enjoyed within my father’s old-fashioned Hall in the country, or within

sight of the reverend tower of Oldwood Abbey. I assure you, sir," she added with impassioned expression, "I am telling you the truth."

"Heaven forbid that my heart should be so hard, or my judgment so warped, as even to incline me to doubt what you say, and what is so well seconded by your countenance, expressing even more than your language. I need not say how delighted I am in finding that this happy domestic spirit is not yet extinct in England," replied the traveller enthusiastically.

"I am told, sir," said the old lady, taking an interest in what was said, "there is still much of patriarchal life and simple rural enjoyment among some of the continental nations. For my own part, I never was farther than Paris and the neighbourhood, and am quite unqualified to be the auditor of you travelled gentlemen: I must appear very ignorant to you, sir. But we were talking just now of educated society abroad, in some of the countries where you have resided,

when you inquired of my daughter if she really preferred retirement. I think you were going to draw a comparison between the English and some other nation in their habits in that respect."

"I was about to compare the genuine contentment I see before me, with the similarly happy circles I have seen living on the continent, where high refinement of manners and mental accomplishment are combined with frugality of living, simplicity and contentment, pure fraternal and social affection, harmony of opinion, and oneness in religious feeling and duty. But, alas! in England, as far as I know, there is but little of this. The low idolatry of money; the ostentatious display of it; the hardening and corrupting, the straining and scheming to amass it; the extravagantly expensive style of living to prevent the suspicion of the lack of it; the usurious bargaining, the buying and selling, and sacrificing the nearest relatives, and suppressing the dearest feelings, to obtain an enormous *incompetency* of

it; the irrational and unenjoyed city dissipation to spend it; the thorough and almost general contempt of *living* talent, worth, virtue, or any thing in those who cannot yet boast of it; the prostitution of the sacred subject of religion, the growth of sectarianism, the janglings of controversy and warping of public opinion, and the barefaced plans of hypocrisy by cunning men, all directly or indirectly striving to get it——”

“What would I not give,” interrupted Helen, “if that ranting Mr. Allmouth, the new parson of Oldwood, had heard what Mr. Jarman says! We have the new light in the neighbourhood, sir,” continued the lively girl, turning to our traveller; “I don’t mean the gas.”

Mr. Orton laughed immoderately at this, but his daughter looked grave.

The conversation now took a turn to the young gentlemen who were expected in two days, when it became less light and more interesting to the family; and was maintained with increasing en-

joyment to all present until a late hour. Mr. Jarman enjoyed it much, for, not being himself a family man, such society came seldom in his way, particularly like the present: for in fact he had so often, in his visits to family friends, been disgusted with snappish discord, or supercilious discontented ceremony betwixt the lady and her husband, or bored with mawkish vanity and insipid display and affectation in the younger branches, that he had almost forsworn society *en famille*, particularly in England. Here however he found, as he conceived, good sense, such as may be expected from well-regulated minds and good dispositions; taste and elegance, the result of education and proper pursuits; agreeable banter and badinage; the quick remark, and well-enjoyed laugh of light and merry hearts, and spirits flowing with consciousness of present enjoyment.

Another and a younger brother of Miss Orton, who was at present studying in the Temple, was

also shortly expected in the country, to complete the family circle; and with discussions regarding the future prospects of the young gentlemen, plans for their prosperity and figure in the world, expressions of affection for them, and wishes for their happiness, mixed with the occasional light jest of the young ladies, and the more excursive discourse and graver wit of the elder part of the company, the evening passed over with the quiet delight usual to the family; but such as took Mr. Jarman very much by surprise, as he could not easily associate any other ideas than those of dulness, insipidity, or borish annoyances, with that of a small family circle *vegetating* in the country. Happiness, as well as misery and discontent, are contagious; and there was a felicity in the daily life of the family at Orton Hall, which not only hallowed home to themselves, but was communicated by a sort of necessity to every one who had the good fortune to live under the same roof, or to sojourn even temporarily among

them. It was such happiness as many whom the world hear little of, and who are possessed of good sense, virtue, and a competence, enjoy at this very hour in England; which poets, such as Samuel Rogers, have sung, and a few of them have enjoyed; but which the lower and higher unhappy, as well as the frivolous or the sordid, are scarcely permitted to imagine. Alas, that in recording the passing occurrences of private life, we should have to trace the not unfrequent causes and means whereby misery and discord encroach upon the hallowed hearth of domestic peace!

CHAPTER III.

A BACHELOR'S YEARNINGS, AND A MAIDEN'S
ANXIETY.

IF there is any one object in nature that in itself, and from situation, is purely and pleasingly interesting, it is a bride—a “bonnie bride”—during the fluttering period which immediately precedes her expected marriage. There is a sympathy in us with other human beings in peculiar situations, particularly those of the opposite sex, which leads us spontaneously to enter into their thoughts, and to try to read their feelings, and which gives us a curiosity to know how their pleasures or sorrows, or hopes or disappointments, affect them. The situation of a beauteous female on the eve of a change, which is *the* great event of a woman's life—the leaving her state of mi-

nority, and parental guardianship, and her father's house, and consigning herself and her future happiness into the arms of one who has hitherto been but her wooing and wishing lover—the hesitations and tremblings of maiden delicacy conflicting with the palpitations of love—the boundings of anticipated joy and increased consequence, chequered with the anxieties of undefined fear—altogether give her an interest to the student of human nature, and the involuntary sympathizer in the gentle and romantic emotions of youth, which forms a delightful relief to the harsher and duller features of general life.

Reflections not unlike this abstracted Mr. Jarman soon after he wakened in the morning, and he began to ask himself, how it was that Lydia Orton's image had haunted his dreams during the night as he found it had, and that her words seemed unaccountably to dwell on his ear, and her accompanying looks to impress his imagination;—he, who had been only a few hours in her

society, and could have no interest in her marriage, which he merely understood as supposed to be near at hand. He wondered at himself, to find, upon strict recollection, that he had watched her countenance and her speech so intensely during the conversation of the previous night, and observed the effect of the sly hints of her cousin, and the graver allusions of her parents upon her speaking features; and that, while she talked with the enthusiasm and boldness of a heroine upon any thing admirable in art or nature, or noble in sentiment, she seemed to shrink with a sensitiveness, which did not appear compatible with the confidence natural between herself and her parents and cousin, at the slightest hint regarding her future situation as a wife. The bare naming of her lover, who it appeared was daily expected at the Hall, brought the blood into her face, as if her delicacy was affected, and it interrupted, for an instant, the serenity of her feelings.

“What is all this to me?” said Mr. Jarman, shaking off, if he could, these thoughts. “Am I going to turn boy again, and envy these young people their happiness? What have I to do, looking into ladies’ eyes, and watching their looks, at this time of day? Pshaw!” he exclaimed, turning round; “I’ll not sleep another night in this house. England, and domestic happiness, and all that sort of thing, have begun, I believe, to put ladies into my head. Heaven pity us poor bachelors! How sentimental we are apt to get about five and forty! I shall become melancholic and poetical. Pshaw!”

When he got down to breakfast, however, with the company of the preceding night, he found his interest in what surrounded him too much divided, notwithstanding the clearness of his perceptions as to his own feelings, for any great improvement of his opinion of himself. The conversation of Mr. Orton and his lady was well enough, but it did not return the fire,

as he called it, of Helen Spencer's wit ; nor could he join as he would in *her* merry laugh, as his whole attention was engrossed by the looks and observations of Miss Orton ; whose character interested him more deeply every moment ; and in fact he found himself, as he afterwards reflected, on that debatable ground, or in the uncertain state between the young and the elderly man, wherein, in many, the feelings and passions of youth, which are still cherished with lingering partiality, continually mix with, and get the victory over, the colder inductions of age ; and wherein the calculating foresight of experience, and the consciousness of many desires being out of season, parts yet slowly and reluctantly with the genial pleasures of life.

He was easily persuaded, however, to remain at the Hall for a few days at least, for various reasons ; in particular, from the extraordinary interest with which Miss Orton had already impressed him—an interest which, in a man of his

time of life, need not be suspected to be any other than a concern for her happiness; but it merged for the present into an anxious curiosity to see the fortunate youth, who had been able to inspire a girl of her beauty and high sentiments with a passion evidently of no common depth and ardour. The following day was expected to bring him home, along with her brother; and as the time approached; she was evidently, with all her good sense, unable to hide the delicate anxiety of her feelings. This anxiety pervaded the whole family, and particularly affected the old gentleman, who had long looked upon the marriage, and the settlement of his daughter, as an event the most important that he was to witness in this world. The lady, her mother, was also thoughtful and full of plans and arrangements for the company expected. Helen Spencer skipped up and down stairs with joy at the thoughts of the coming fêtes and dinner parties, and increased the bustle, by way of making her-

self useful. The servants partook of the general impatience to see the young gentlemen; and they longed for events that would vary the dull uniformity of country life.

This day passed over like all other days, whether the flight of time be disturbed by our anxieties or not; and the next day dawned, after a sleepless night to Lydia Orton, and was hailed with joy as the one which was to bring to the sight of the anxious inmates of the Hall, strangers so interesting. At breakfast little was said, excepting conjectures regarding the probably altered look of the young heir of the family, who had so long been abroad, and surmises regarding his companion, in language more distant and ambiguous. Mr. Orton and his guest afterwards mounted their horses, and rode upwards through the woods and other of the highest ground at the rear of the mansion; the squire halting occasionally at angles, and on elevated and open spots, and applying his glass to his eye,

in the endeavour to catch a glimpse of approaching travellers.

“ I have now, I think, got to a spot,” said Mr. Jarman, looking out, “ where I have a pretty distinct view of the Castle, so hid among the woods beyond the village, and whose turrets I have so much watched in my ride ; pray, sir, to whom does it belong ? It seems a princely chateau.”

“ That is Clynch Castle, sir, the property of Mr. Stavely, the very gentleman whom we are hourly expecting to arrive. He is the sole heir of my late good friend, Arthur Stavely, who died in the Castle. Alas ! it seems but as yesterday since he and myself stood on this very spot, and watched the daring gambols, round the lake beneath us, of his nephew, then a boy, as he rode like the wind on a mischievous gennet, which was his favourite, and which was the terror of the very grooms of the neighbourhood. How time flies ! And now my dear friend lies

with the dead ; and the boy is a grave man, as I learn, of six and twenty, about to make one of my family. Events are coming round, Mr. Jarman, to thrust me out of the world, to make room for my posterity ; and one at my time of life begins to feel more sensibly the truth of the saying, *Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes.*"

"His nephew then was no doubt frequently at the Hall, here ?" inquired Mr. Jarman, a little eager to hear more of him, and of his acquaintance with Miss Orton. "A glorious peripatetic retirement this for a youth, who had any romance in him, to study Plato in, or Ovid, mayhap."

"I understand you, Mr. Jarman ; and remembering that I was once young myself, I will not hesitate to tell you what an anxious father need not be ashamed of having observed. When Arthur Stavely grew into years, and when, being very wealthy, the cares of ambition failed to interest him, he felt the loneliness of his bachelor manner of living, and in the decline of life set his

affections, like myself, on the young of his relatives, who were to come after him. His unfortunate brother lost all his children, excepting the fine boy we are speaking of, who discovering every quality that fosters the highest hopes, soon won the ardent affection of his uncle. My daughter was then shooting up into a studious and thoughtful girl; wise beyond her years, but of a lofty and imaginative disposition; inclined, as I perceived, with some anxiety, to romance; not indeed of that kind which, attached often to the lowest intellect and the weakest nerves, has made almost the very term ridiculous; but a romance growing out of the high fancies engendered by her reading and secluded life, and out of principles naturally approaching the sublime, and but little tempered or reduced to experiment by real contact with the world.

“ Arthur Stavely almost envied me the possession of this daughter, and brought his nephew

with him in his almost diurnal rides to the Hall ; when Lydia seeing little other society, and looking up to him for assistance in such of her studies as are rightly said to belong to no sex, an acquaintance was formed between them, which at length brought out evident mutual admiration, and, doubtless, other softer sentiments natural to their time of life. My late friend and myself observed this, but so far from disapproving of the gathering affections of those who were so dear to us, their interesting development gave us sincere delight ; not only from the pleasure of contemplating the pure enjoyments and cloudless hopes of the young people, but because it opened to us prospects which we had not anticipated, of a union of our families in the persons of the young couple, which strengthened our friendship in our latter years, and taught us to consider ourselves as brothers, who in the course of nature were in a few years to rest together in the

dust, and to resign to these our beloved children our well-saved property, and our places in the world.

“ So necessary had young Stavely become to his uncle’s happiness, that the old man could reluctantly spare him for a short time at college, and provided instead an accomplished tutor to finish his education. But even the tutor of the one of the young people and the governess of the other, seemed to have caught the feelings of Mr. Stavely and myself ; for their several pupils were often left to themselves to study together, so that they were much in each other’s company, in the library, and by the side of the lake, and became pupils and preceptors to each other. At length my worthy old friend took sickness and died, and Louis, who by this time was nearly of age, went to pass some years on the continent; but before his departure every necessary explanation took place, and an arrangement was made

for his marriage with my daughter, as soon as he should return to take possession of his property. By our letters we are led to expect his return to the Hall this very day, as you have heard, along with my eldest son, who was also on his travels, and who met with Mr. Stavely in the city of Hanover; and you will excuse, Mr. Jarman, the natural anxiety of a father to see his son and son-in-law, after several years' absence, and of my daughter to welcome in safety a beloved brother and her future husband."

Mr. Jarman mused a few moments, when this tale was finished; his interest in the circle he had now got into, evidently increasing every moment; at length he said, "Positively, sir, I am almost as anxious as yourself to see those of whom I have heard what so much interests me. There is no appearance as yet of any travellers on the line of road in view. Had not we better ride on towards this Castle to while away the

hour? I am curious to see more of a building which, at this distance, looks so antiquated, I should almost say romantic."

"I should prefer taking a circuit through the village and round the plantation to the east of the Hall, for, to say truth, I do not feel quite at my ease going up to the Castle, until Louis himself returns. The present occupier, sir Hugh Salvage, is rather a weak old man, of whom I somehow never could make an agreeable neighbour, or enjoy his society: he is so different from its good old proprietor who is gone."

"Then the Castle is occupied, sir? and by a stranger?—that seems odd."

"It may appear so to you; but, I believe, sir Hugh was an old acquaintance of my late friend, and on the strength of friendship obtained the occupation of the Castle and grounds on a rent, during the time the heir was absent on the continent. He was to have given up possession in March last; but, I believe, he has pre-

vailed upon my young friend Mr. Stavely to allow him a few months longer; yet he seems to linger."

"Humph!—Well, sir, let us *déboucher* by the village, if you please. I shall be interested either way, particularly if you will give me as true and particular an account of this village of Oldwood, its history and statistics, public and private, political, civil, moral, and religious, and so forth; and if you further condescend to entertain me with an account of the little great men in the neighbourhood, who, living in the country, have influence on the peace and happiness of the people, and who furnish the important materials of gossip, foreign and domestic."

"Very good, sir; very good. I perceive you have not forgotten your military tactics; and I really admire your address in drawing me out, and diverting my mind to-day, in my impatience, with a task so extended. But, Mr. Jarman, although I could discourse you excellent village

politics, I cannot expect that they should have interest for you, who have seen so much of the great world."

"Why not, sir? Does not a town, or thriving village, frequently possess the elements of great governments? Is it not often a complete section of human society, where, from the minuteness and clearness of detail which it furnishes, the painstaking inquirer may study the springs of action and progress of opinion in their rudiments, before they are made manifest in the aggregate of moral force?"

"At a more convenient season, sir, after the arrival of my young friends, I will enter fully into the history and present state of the village and neighbourhood, which, from recent occurrences, may not be unlikely to interest a man of your turn of mind. Meantime, while we ride through it, I can sketch you the simple history, if you like it, of almost all the blithe mothers, and pretty maidens, and honest yeomen, and

small traders in it, who have grown up in my recollection, like natural flowers in a sunny shelter; and I have observed them, and I may say, watched over many of them, almost from infancy, and rejoiced in their happiness as if they had been my own children."

"God bless them! and you with them, sir, who take an interest in their peace and happiness. I never saw a prettier village. I have admired it ever since I obtained the first glimpse of it, as its white cottages reflected the setting sun the other evening. It seems a very picture of rural comfort and enjoyment for the peasantry, such, as I fondly believe, still abounds in England. The smoke swelling upwards through the scattered trees, which almost hide it, seems to indicate plenty within the quiet habitations from which it issues; and the overlooking tower of that reverend abbey in the centre, bespeaks to me the spirit of a hallowing and comforting religion."

“ Alas, my friend !” said Mr. Orton, seriously, “ your last allusion reminds me that the picture I am willing to draw of the happiness and peace of the villagers of Oldwood, is now only applicable to times past and gone, I fear never to be recalled. But that happiness *was* enjoyed for generations beyond memory, until within this year or two, when an innovating spirit of religious bigotry and contention, poisoned the minds of the inhabitants. I am sorry to say that this unhappy state of things was brought about, in the first instance, by the ignorant zeal of some individuals belonging to our valuable church herself; well meaning, as I doubt not, but evidently weak and mistaken men; who, mixed up with hypocrites and interested persons, who are always at hand to fan the ardour, and applaud the folly, of such persons, for their own purposes; have, by way of diffusing religious knowledge, turned our quiet neighbourhood into a very bear garden of sectarian contention and

theological pedantry; which is beginning to turn father against son, the wife against the husband, brother against sister, and tempt the servant to spurn his master; has exalted clamorous ignorance over good sense and experience; turned humble and industrious peasants and workmen into lazy, bigoted demagogues; changed the very spirit of the simple villagers, and almost broken the heart of the venerable and excellent pastor, whose sober and rational instruction is drowned in the vulgar babble of bastard knowledge and sectarian divinity."

"Is it possible, sir, that the disturbing spirit of proselytism should have found its way into so secluded a spot? But let us not talk of such things now. I have a horror at the very thought of polemics, in which, after much bitterness and strife of spirit, we are sure to end where we began; with the trifling exception of making enemies of every one whom we cannot agree with, and probably reasoning ourselves out of whatever re-

ligion our early instructors, and the buffeting and cuffs of the world, have left us."

"I am pleased to hear, however, Mr. Jarman, that you and I am not likely to disagree about it."

"And I am no less pleased to hear a country gentleman, like yourself, sir, express yourself as you do. There was some pith in the language in which you described the effects of that sort of thing among the villagers, just now. It is gratifying to hear things, with reference to what goes under the name of religion, called by their right names, in these shilly-shally times: where, if the example of grimace, and the most unmanly hypocrisy, is set by a lord mayor of London, or a worn-out sinner of the higher ranks, who chooses, as a *dernier ressort*, to fish for popularity in the turbid waters of mind-degrading zeal for some popular schism, even wise and learned men shall think themselves obliged to suppress their real

sentiments, and to contribute their portion of cant to countenance a prevailing fanaticism."

"Hush! my dear sir; I hope there is no one hearing us. We shall be called infidels and atheists immediately. The very church to which we belong, and which, I think, we both heartily reverence, may perhaps join the cry against us; it is so fashionable to pretend to a zeal for religion."

While the gentlemen rode on, discoursing in this manner, the ladies in the Hall did not pass the time in conversation so rapid, or of such variety. As the day advanced, Lydia Orton and her cousin had mounted to a sort of tower, in the ancient part of the mansion, where they watched anxiously for the expected approach of the travellers. As hour after hour passed away, and the time of dinner drew near, without any indication of those who were much earlier expected, Lydia's spirits began to sink, and her heart to

flutter, with anticipated disappointment. But her spirits rose and fell alternately; as, at one time, she chided herself for over anxiety and unnecessary apprehensions, and, at another, her fears pictured to her a hundred accidents which might have befallen him who was so dear to her, or events which might yet take place to prevent a happiness which was almost too great for her expectations. When the mind is in this state, a word has often turned the scale of hope or apprehension in our view of what is before us.

It happened, that in a moment after being comforted by her cousin, Lydia, catching the picture of soon meeting her lover which Helen had drawn, was seduced into a rapturous expression regarding her expected happiness, while looking down upon the lake beneath, the contemplation of which seemed always to inspire her with pleasing thoughts;—"But," she ended, checking herself, "you must think me foolish, Helen, now; and still more childish must I appear ten years

after this, if you are so cruel as to remember against me this morning's anxiety, when I shall be a sober, staid, married woman, ready to laugh at others in my turn."

"*Shall be!* Lydia?"

"Did I say so? may I not venture to say so?"

"I don't know."

"Perhaps I have said too much. Won't you allow my concern to be as much for my brother as for Stavely?"

"Lydia, you think too deeply, and feel too warmly."

"I know I do; but what is it you would say, Helen?"

"Heaven grant that your *shall be*, Lydia, may ever come to pass, after all; or that, if Stavely and you *are* united, you may be as happy together as you anticipate."

"What can you mean, Helen, by a suspicion expressed with such unusual seriousness? Do you know any thing? Have you heard any thing

that you have not revealed to me? You cannot have been so cruel."

"Don't alarm yourself, Lydia, by any silly surmise of mine. Need I say, I wish most ardently that the highest earthly happiness may be yours? I assure you I know nothing to give rise to the words of suspicion that escaped me; but merely recollecting at the moment, the saying of the poet, 'that never yet did the course of true love run smooth,' I expressed a wish that your anticipations regarding him on whom you have evidently set your heart, may be fully realized; and that supposing you *should* be united, you may experience no disappointment of your long-cherished feelings."

"The admonition is good, my dear; it is most just, and seasonable, and—"

But the thought uttered so kindly and naturally, from that impulse which the commonness of disappointment suggests to almost any, upon hearing expressions of much confidence of

expected happiness, struck the thoughtful and imaginative girl like a message from the spirit of prophecy itself. Conversation between the ladies was completely put an end to, by the tissue of painful fancies and sinking associations which the bare idea had conjured up in Miss Orton's mind; and as the hour of dinner arrived and passed over without any appearance of those who were so anxiously looked for, her spirits sunk into intense and foreboding apprehension.

A sober and ruminating silence hung over the evening party, which was joined by the rev. Mr. Oxford, the vicar of Oldwood church, an amiable and modest old man, who did not seem, any more than those immediately interested, to have spirits to dispel the cloud which the disappointment, which might amount to nothing after all, had evidently cast over the whole family. Disappointment, even in small matters, in a circle more than ordinarily free from vicissitude, has generally much effect for a time, and

is a monitor in strict friendship with wisdom, being a great promoter of seasonable reflection upon the mixed and interrupted series of human enjoyments. But the hearts of those who felt most this evening at length found relief in the sympathies of each other, and the pensive moralizing strain of the conversation which soothed the excited feelings and allayed apprehension; and when the good and wholesome words of a rational and benevolent religion were uttered by the venerable clergyman, care and anxiety gradually fled, and the family retired to rest, with happy feelings of personal affection, and good hopes that Providence would send their friends to them in safety.

The cause, however, of the depressed feelings of the clergyman arose from the virtuous interest he took in the moral and religious state of his parish, where events were in progress which filled him with disgust and apprehension, and with which even Mr. Orton was very imperfectly

acquainted, although he had so readily undertaken to describe them to Mr. Jarman. If it be true, as the latter thought, that a small community may often be taken as a *sample* of general society, and that the aggregate may be advantageously studied in sections, the state of society in the village and neighbourhood will require a distinct chapter, which we shall here take leave to introduce; particularly as the proper understanding of this point, and of the characters of some of the actors engaged, is quite necessary to the development of our story.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VILLAGE.

IT belongs to the dignity and importance of history to describe communities of men as a mighty whole; to dive into the deep springs of habit and opinion; to trace, with proper shrewdness, effects in the social mass up to their causes; and even not to disdain to dissect, to lay open, and to anatomize, for the benefit of the curious, the many-headed monster of human society: provided always there be found an audience to attend to, and duly to encourage by applause, the labours of the historical operator.

With a just idea, therefore, of the greatness of our present undertaking, we proceed to give a rapid sketch of the rise, progress, and present state, civil, political, statistical, and religious, of

the ancient village of Oldwood, in the neighbourhood of Orton Hall, just described. The population of this important part of the empire had been gradually increasing, notwithstanding the occasional accidents of ambitious farm-servants and daring yeomen, who had in times of great emergency *deserted* their native village, and braved the seas and the French in foreign parts; so that at the period when our history commences it amounted, according to the most authentic accounts, to nine hundred and eighty-seven souls.

The form of the village cannot, perhaps, be satisfactorily described by any written account, particularly from the fact of the early history of this community being, like that of most states and empires, involved in the impenetrable obscurity of barbarous ages, when city geometry was evidently in its infancy; for every man having reared his house or cottage wherever he listed, and with its front or its gable-end facing

whichever aspect of the heavens was most agreeable to him (for the mariner's compass could not then have been invented, nor did there, in those days, appear the least necessity for the arts of levelling or shaping), the village could not be said to have any particular form, shape, or make, excepting that, by the gradual progress of civilization and refinement, a winding road, which in modern times came to be called a street, worked its way through it, principally by the help of the church and the burying ground, which amid all the mutations of time, and the impertinent intrusions of improvement and regularity, stood stubborn and unaccommodating, nearly in the centre; looking, no doubt, with venerable contempt upon the upstart houses of red brick, and the newfangled doors and windows, which gradually, though slowly, rose presumptuously around. The village of Oldwood, therefore, in its external conformation, in its lanes and passages, subsidiary to the main thoroughfare, by

which you could get through the body of it, was certainly of the most fanciful, and, if you please, romantic description; yet the contented inhabitants had such comfortable houses and cottages, and little gardens and grass plots, and cow-houses, and piggeries, and so forth, that, in the true spirit of Englishmen, it was by long reasoning and discussion that they were slowly brought to see that they could, by possibility, be any happier from the removal of their accustomed inconveniences, and the annoyances to which their fathers had submitted, or which they, to speak correctly, had rather enjoyed.

The civil polity and political circumstances of the inhabitants of Oldwood, cannot well be separated; so we shall treat both these important branches of our subject together as one. The villagers being generally engaged in agricultural pursuits (along with a few small traders which these supported and upheld), and having kind and considerate landlords, and a rich country to

cultivate, were in easy circumstances, and consequently grumbled less at the taxes and poor-rates than was strictly consistent with the character of Englishmen. They had, however, their own opinions and politics too; they hated Buonaparte and the French with all their hearts (it was then war time); the history of the great exploits and untimely deaths of many of the youths they had spared to fight for their country in foreign parts, formed the subject of many a dolorous tale and ballad in the winter nights; and as for their king, and their religion, and their laws—to tell the truth, they knew very little of any of the three,—but that did not hinder their loving them all with a jealous and stubborn fervour.

We are unable to entertain the reader, in strict conformity to historical truth, with an account of any violent or bloody revolution in political conduct and opinion in this village; for the people got pretty good prices for their grain and their cattle (which includes the governing idea

of the wheelwright being decently paid for his wheels, and the village tailor for his habiliments), were not rackrented, and could pay their landlords without any great distress or anxiety; and so there was but little poverty. And Oldwood not possessing the eminent distinction of being a borough, there was no electioneering nor honourable bribery, nor even cajoling, nor canvassing, nor drinking bouts; and so peaceably and happily did the people live; and so few disputes could they get up among themselves, that the spirited young men of the village were obliged to go to the large towns and cities thirty or forty miles distant for the natural luxury of a quarrelling adventure and a broken head. We admit candidly that the people were sometimes rather at a loss for a little *life* of this sort, especially those who were becoming wealthy and pursy; but this arose from the peculiarity of the case, namely, that there was only one lawyer, or rather the third part of one lawyer, which could be claimed by

the village, and he happened to be a remarkably honest, good-natured man, living upon his own property, about three miles off; so that when any of the Oldwood folks went to him with a case against his neighbour, so fond was our attorney of company and sociality, that he forthwith set them down to eat and drink, advised them not to quarrel, and sent them home tipsy and happy, as far as their grudging disappointment of a lawsuit and a quarrel, to entertain them for seven years, would allow.

Although the general community of this village was lamentably deficient, in comparison of many greater towns, in political and every other sort of knowledge; although the invaluable *law*, for which many of them had fought and bled, was to the people a dead letter; and though they were in general backward to a degree in knowledge of the world, they somehow did not feel any particular want in respect of this luxury, more than other luxuries; and it was remarked

that the villagers of Oldwood laughed louder and oftener than the same class of people in any of the larger communities within fifty miles of them.

But it is the state of this community with reference to religion, at the period when our story commences, upon the investigation of which we have bestowed the most pains; and it is to this point we are obliged to petition the reader to surrender to our history a portion of his patience and attention, being fully aware that the very mention of the subject is sufficient to scare away any ordinary devourer of books of this kind; it being supposed to be a thing upon which no earthly interest in human affairs can turn, and to which it is never dreamt that any extraordinary effect or romantic occurrence in life or fortune can be traced. We flatter ourselves, that we shall be soon able to show, by the not uncommon events of our history, that no prejudice can be more unfounded; and this we shall attempt to do

with as little of the cant generally employed upon this much abused subject, as the nature of it will admit.

There was not between the Frith of Forth in Scotland and the Frith of the Ganges in India a more moral and religious people, as far as it could be traced in their duties and feelings, than the simple and well-disposed inhabitants of Oldwood. Yet, until within a short period before the arrival of Mr. Jarman in the neighbourhood, the good folks were really so ignorant, if you came to examine them upon the profound points of doctrine of our holy religion, that we should positively be ashamed to stand up in any auxiliary religious society-meeting and describe them, unless it were to draw a picture of them, for the usual purpose for which these meetings are called. The honest people had as much faith as could be desired; yet not one, perhaps, could draw you a distinction between one sort of faith and another: and if you were to ask the most exemplary of them to

give you his opinion of *historical* faith, or *demoniac* faith, or *implicit* faith, or *appropriation* faith, or *evangelical* faith, ten to one if he could pick you out of all these which was the true and most approved. As for the evidences for the truth of Christianity, about which such a rout is made, they wanted none of them, for it never came into their heads to doubt an iota of it; and as for the miracles and so forth, they believed them every one, and a great deal more if you were anxious for it: but if you asked them to give you a scantling of the arguments by which a miracle may be proved to your face, as clear as if you saw or smelt it, their fingers would be in their own hair immediately, with the other usual gestures of perfect confusion. In short, they were almost as ignorant of the peculiar niceties belonging to the doctrines of revealed religion as the pitiable inhabitants of Loo Choo, and were besides nearly as unlearned as these good-natured fools in the art of war and the use of money. Of

what different degrees of divine knowledge, we may here exclaim, may the human mind be possessed ! What a vast disproportion there was between the simple perceptions of religious obligation in the minds of these people, and the theological subtilty of the French Jansenists in Pascal's time ! But though the Jansenists had the best of it in theological knowledge, the Oldwood villagers had by much the advantage in point of moral conduct. The poor villager sinned little, and was penitent ; the Jansenist could not only sin more, but justify or excuse his sins better ; *he* gratified his passions like a gentleman, and excused his conduct, or wiped out the sin of it, by the doctrines of theology.

Purposing originally to give to the world an accurate and separate account of the potentates and powers in the neighbourhood, who ruled and reigned over popular opinion, and the laws and customs of Oldwood, we are yet necessitated to alter our plan for brevity's sake, and to infringe

here so far as to give a sketch of the character, as a theologian and teacher, of the principal officiating clergyman, which will serve greatly to elucidate the religious state of the people.

The rev. Mr. Oxford, now an aged man, had been inducted into the village church nearly half a century prior to the period at which we take up the thread of our history. He was at that time a zealous young man, of great natural sincerity of disposition, who, fresh from his books, talked warmly in private, and preached flamingly in public. He saw all the world going evidently to a place we decline to name, and was fully convinced that he was specially commissioned by Divine Providence to make the world very different from what he found it. He strove hard, for a time, with a certain celebrated personage, who shall also be nameless, in the work of converting mankind, and found his fervour greatly hampered and restrained, particularly in the church service, by the prescribed and printed

prayers, which were not at all to his taste, as they quite fettered the holy heat with which he was inflamed.

Although the public mind in Oldwood was not at that time in a state readily to imbibe and thoroughly to enjoy a new impulse and speedy conversion in religion, (poverty and distress, real or imaginary, being almost indispensable to great fruition in this respect), yet some, particularly of the females, began to be strongly affected; a great change seemed to be in progress; while, in the meantime, some of the neighbouring gentlemen, who were not altogether certain that a religious change among the villagers might ultimately be for the better, and not for the worse, thought fit to lay the matter before the rector, that the world in Oldwood might not be turned upside down without his being at least apprised of it. But the rector, a man of great worth and learning, although bearing the stigma of some

that he was little better than a philosopher, replied with great coolness :

“ Mr. Oxford is a man of intellect ; I know him well : he is a young man, and an enthusiast in whatever he undertakes ; but the intellect of which he is possessed will work its own way, until it settle down into just views of things, and sober sense. Let him alone, my friends, and you will see that my words will prove true.”

This prophecy of the rector's seemed for a time far from being realized, for Mr. Oxford's zeal waxed stronger and stronger, until, beginning to pity the darkness of the world upon religion, he took to study for its benefit, and wrote for the press, that his cogitations and discoveries might not be confined to the obscure village within which his labours were officially confined. His first publication was a sermon on the miracle of the loaves and fishes ; afterwards another on the resurrection, with proofs and reasonings entirely

new ; and lastly, a most profound discourse on the miraculous conception : none of which, to his astonishment, excited the least attention in the religious world, (except that he was occasionally treated with some sly hints and suggestions by his brethren of the cloth, at an after-dinner chat, which were more galling to him than the publisher's bills for his sermons, which he was regularly obliged to pay). He was not to be arrested, however, in his ardour in the cause of religion and of mankind ; and he planned a great work on the never-failing subject, " the evidences for Christianity : " besides various profound and elaborate treatises upon the apocryphal gospels and epistles, the seventy weeks of Daniel, the opening of the seven seals, the restoration of the Jews, the millennium, &c. &c.

While he was big with these great purposes and projects, and while his friends began to fear that this enormous learning might turn the young gentleman's brain, a change began to show

itself in his reading and conversation, no one could tell how brought about: he began to associate, more than was supposed possible, with men of science and wit, when he could meet them, because he had heretofore said awful things from the pulpit regarding the reception that poets and philosophers were sure to receive, and their dreadful fate where “vain philosophy” and “human reason” would do them little service. He was observed to order a different species of literature from his bookseller, to enjoy himself more in society, and to mix more with his parishioners, until he finally “*settled down*,” as the rector had said, into an amiable and sensible man. His sermons became more practical, moral, and applicable to the intellect and every-day life of his charge. He now seemed to delight in contemplating and illustrating the pure example and beneficent moral precepts of the Founder of our religion; and while some of his hearers were disappointed and discontented to find that they could now *understand*

what was preached to them, the majority were made happy in their minds, and instructed in their understandings, by his well-digested lessons of religion and truth.

From this time forth he was the idol of his parish, the adviser of the weak, and the arbiter of the petty differences among the quarrelsome ; and although he never in a direct manner discouraged controversy, in those who *would* reason, upon points which they had better leave to mere faith, yet he managed to direct the simple minds of the inquisitive into proper and practical channels ; and by the help of a little judicious ridicule he extinguished religious hate, and banished fanaticism, for many years, from the peaceful and happy village of Oldwood.

But another king rose that knew not Joseph ! The harbinger of a change of things is usually a change of men, ignorant perhaps of the tendency and effects of the conduct of those who have pre-

ceded them ; and thus popular opinion is operated upon continually by the wisdom or folly of those who, from their situation in society, often wield a weapon, of the power of which few are fully aware. The aged rector who was Mr. Oxford's original superior having died, his place, instead of being filled by the faithful vicar, for whom it had long been intended, was, by the superior interest of a religious nobleman, given to the nobleman's own brother, at the commencement of a period wherein a party in the church herself chose to set the example of fanaticism to the restless spirits who will always be sectarian in any thing, and in which they, the sectarians, soon far excelled her to her own injury. Whether the honourable and reverend new rector, who had received this additional living for the pure benefit of the church and of religion, had any principles of any peculiar kind himself, never could be clearly ascertained. But the character of the

great lord, his brother, was no mystery ; he was evidently an officious, weak, busy man ; worldly, vain, and (at this period) strongly evangelical.

Lord Overly, which was the title of this excellent nobleman, was a man who never could be without his reigning favourite and protegee ; and this favourite was in the natural course of things the ready echo of the changing opinions of his patron. It was soon discovered, between these personages, that the village of Oldwood was lamentably backward in religious instruction ; that another church might be set up advantageously for the cause of religion in this growing village ; for it was more than hinted that in the old church the *real spiritual* word of life was not held forth in full accordance to the articles which the clergymen subscribed ; but that, with a coolness and calmness very unsuitable for rapid conviction, there was preached a sort of plain and moralizing compound of Arminianism and Socinianism, bordering on rank deism, or Epi-

curism, which was neither Lutheranism nor Calvinism, but might in some respects be denominated Arianism, or some other *ism*, which, in short, was not the right one in which the people ought to be instructed. It was therefore highly desirable, not only that a new church should be built, that the people might not perish for lack of knowledge, but that a servant of God should be inducted into it, who might preach the real evangelical gospel, and kindle a flame of pure religion in the hearts of the hitherto torpid and ill-instructed inhabitants of Oldwood.

Great men can do what they please for the good of the people, particularly in "country quarters;" and the necessary measures having been at length adopted, the reverend Mr. Allmouth was forthwith appointed to preach to the people "another gospel," and to perform divine service, *pro tempore*, in an outer building, connected with the irregular fabric of the ancient church, which seemed in a most wonderful man-

ner to have been kept in reserve by Providence merely to meet the zeal of these godly persons, that no time might be lost in so urgent a matter, during the period wherein a new church was being erected.

The arrangement of these important matters, and the pleasing prospect of "doing good," in the conversion of the sinners which so much abounded in the neglected charge of Mr. Oxford, was a great event to Lord Overly; who being tired of screwing and worrying his tenants, quarrelling with his steward, prosecuting poachers, and other acts of *distributive justice* in the country, and plaguing his political party in town, found great relief in this labour of love, directed to the promotion of such wise and benevolent purposes, in this rising village. He determined (as no condescension was too great in the service of religion) to accompany the rev. Mr. Allmouth, his zealous protegee, to Oldwood, in person, along with his brother, the rector; that the

good work might have the benefit of his lordship's own gracious presence and public countenance, and that the world might see visibly and predict confidently how true religion was to flourish, and God was to be glorified, in this auspicious time, under the immediate patronage of the aristocracy of the nation.

A proud day for this highly favoured village was that, when these great personages, with their servants and sundry godly retainers, all glowing with zeal, made their public entry into Oldwood. It was the triumph of religion, pure and evangelical, and of the church of England herself, over her hidden enemies; in the shape of cold morality, dangerous good works, deadly ignorance, woful blindness of mind, and Laodicean lukewarmness to all sound doctrine; without which, what was Christianity better than sheer infidelity, or French theophilanthropism? The principal inhabitants were assembled in the usual place for public business, the great room of the

inn ; with a reasonably numerous crowd of idlers round the doors, and in the streets, on that great occasion ; prayers were read by the rev. Mr. Allmouth, with an intense piety, such as had never been known in Oldwood ; and Lord Overly was delivered of a speech, with the leading ideas of which we are enabled, by a happy chance, to favour the world. These will show the profound inferences of the noble lord, the accuracy and extent of his information, and the perfect candour of his mind.

After a brilliant eulogium upon England, as a religious nation, to which exalted character she owed not only her internal peace, universal happiness, wealth, and prosperity, but her external success over the heretical and idolatrous nations of the earth, in the conversion of which she was incessantly employing her benevolent efforts with splendid success, he proceeded to harrow up the souls of his audience with the horrors of the French revolution. That convulsion, and all its

terrible events, he clearly traced to the want of sound knowledge of religion among the people, and nothing else, and to the fatal effects of the poison instilled into their minds by infidel writers, who had driven them to desperation in that ill-fated nation, and would do the same in England, but for the unceasing efforts of wise and pious men (like the speaker, no doubt), whose valuable time, and whose private fortunes, were devoted to the great and godlike purposes of improving the religion of the people at home, and spreading it with zeal and effect over the whole earth. His lordship acknowledged, however, with deep feeling and evident distress of mind, that it could not be concealed, that there were within the bosom of the church herself deep and dark errors in doctrine, and a deficiency of zeal, which was most alarming. Besides, he was afflicted to perceive a leaning to the vain wisdom of men, and a predilection for a species of worldly policy and human reasoning in her teachers, who evidently

truckled to the presumptuous and upsetting spirit of the day, which was bringing the church fast to a precipice. The increasing knowledge and zeal of dissenters and sectarians, on doctrinal points, must be met with corresponding zeal, and by searching of the Scriptures, else he trembled to think what the church of England might come to. He consoled himself and his hearers, however, by the consideration, that there were still servants of God in the land, who were willing to exhaust themselves in His cause; and he was most happy to say that *he* had been the humble instrument of planting among them a reverend gentleman, full of the spirit of zeal and piety, who was evidently raised up by Providence to stand in the gap, and arrest the alarming progress of error and infidelity. This eminent divine was gifted with a deep knowledge of the mysterious doctrines of Christianity; and he was sure his reverend friend would labour, in season and out

of season, in communicating them, by the divine blessing, to the meanest capacity.

His lordship concluded by informing the company, in the most gracious manner, that, in order to the instruction of the people, and the furtherance of the interests of the church and of religion, he had ordered for this district a liberal supply of Bibles and tracts, to be immediately distributed, which he exhorted the people to search continually, and discuss fearlessly, in order that they might not only know intimately the great points of faith, but that they might be *all of one mind*; a desirable result, which he had no doubt would be the ultimate effect of pious perseverance in such evangelical discussions.

This noble effusion was received with clamorous applause by the majority of the people: they did not all understand it, to be sure; but then, it had the attraction of novelty. Some of the country gentlemen, however, and even of the

small traders of the town, sneered and looked at one another during the delivery ; but the venerable Mr. Oxford, who was invited merely for the sake of appearances, and who sat little observed, heard it with deep concern ; although the expression of his face was only that of musing and contempt. Various speakers succeeded the noble lord and his reverend curate, all vying with each other in praising his lordship, and the rector, and themselves, and every one present ; and in congratulating the world on the brilliant prospect which appeared to mankind, since lords and gentlemen had condescended to become religious.

A grand dinner concluded the *business* of the day : love burned in the hearts of all ; and as it waxed late, many who never felt religion before, became religious in their drink ; spoke speeches, and vowed vows, and at length retired to bed, in absolute astonishment at their own eloquence. As to his lordship, a bright career appeared to

the high ambition with which he was now inflamed, and which Providence had all at once opened to him. He argued philosophically with himself, that, as there was a tide in the affairs of men, he was determined to take *his* at the flood, which had so propitiously begun to flow; for as this thing was not done in a corner, his zeal would not fail to be appreciated in the proper quarter; and already he saw himself praised in printed Reports of the flourishing state of religion, appointed chairman of public meetings of the various auxiliary societies and tract committees; and, in short, a courted and applauded ringleader in "the religious world."

The religious state of the village and country round Oldwood, could not but vastly improve under the efficient ministry of the rev. Mr. Allmouth; for when it is considered that he clearly understood and expounded, in the most lucid terms, not only the Athanasian creed and all its appendages, but was quite at home in the

doctrines of predestination, election, and reprobation, with the covenants, and the types and shadows; and that he explained to the marvelling villagers the heresies of the Arminians, Universalists, Unitarians, Sabellians, Sandemanians, Sublapsarians, Glassites, Bereans, Buchanites, Baptists, Muggletonians, and heaven knows what; the errors of all which he successfully exposed and confuted, to the wonderment of the people—we repeat, when all that this religious genius clearly understood, and was perfect master of, is considered, he must be allowed to be a man of more than common understanding. Besides, although, to give him his due, he generally insisted chiefly on the branches of what are called the doctrines of evangelical Christianity; still, when he chose, he could set his people right, as he often did, on the mighty doctrines of liberty and necessity; could show the true meaning of all the prophecies; and, as for the sublime visions of the four beasts, and of the great red

dragon, he saw their intent, and could turn out their hidden meaning as clear as the day. In short, this doughty sir Hudibras of our day could fight all sorts of Bible battles; he could at once reconcile all *seeming* irreconcilabilities in Scripture criticism; and it was even said that in mathematics he could cause parallel lines to meet (if he was only allowed to make them long enough), and could, by mere force of logic, bring the three angles of a triangle to rub noses together.

It is not to be wondered at, that a mighty *change* was wrought in the village of Oldwood by the ministrations of this profound and judicious divine. A severe searching of the Scriptures took place; light broke in upon the hitherto benighted people; discussion and controversy were heard in every house; the right of private judgment and of inquiry into the Scriptures, and every thing religious was extolled to the clouds, by the shopman behind his counter, the publican

in his tap, and the countryman on his dung-cart ; people were astonished at their former ignorance, and the “ march of mind ” in theological matters was perfectly amazing. To forward this spread of religion, prayer-meetings were held, and penny-a-week societies were instituted ; every villager became a president, a treasurer, or a committeeman ; and as in time some of the men began to grow tired of these new employments, the women and children became ultimately the chief promoters of the great work.

But this flourishing state of things was not without alloy, and merged at length into a tissue of evils which were hitherto utterly unknown, and which totally changed the characters of the inhabitants of Oldwood. The men became disputatious and idle : for how could they labour for the meat that perisheth, with their minds working, like yeast, with questions of such deep importance to their souls ?—and how much more was it not a duty to set their neighbours right

upon matters of eternal concernment, than to occupy themselves with the perishing things of a present world? Thus, many of the women became gloomy, nervous, and unhappy, from deep convictions of their own terrible sinfulness; and were tossed and distracted with hopes and fears of future bliss or misery. Besides the private meetings, two additional alehouses were set up as a speculation for the convenience of argument and controversy. The more industrious or acute were naturally proud of their newly acquired knowledge; differences of opinion begot opposition, and contemptuous language; and theological knowledge worked strange work in minds which had no other knowledge to keep pace with it. The whole village became divided into parties, formed out of the leading factions that went to the two different churches; and alienations of friends and families, bitterness, strife, and religious, though hardly conscious, hate, made alarming changes in this hitherto

peaceful and happy community. In vain did Mr. Oxford exert himself to moderate the ferment of religious novelty and party schism ; with sound piety, and the still small voice of affectionate persuasion, and the powerless weapons of common sense, reason, and experience. The people loved him as a man, and acknowledged his worth ; but they left his church in numbers, and crowded to the new preacher, whose doctrines puzzled their understandings, and mystified their simple and untrained apprehensions. Thus the whole people were alive with religious knowledge, contention, and animosity. A disposition to idleness, and theological reasoning and reading, diminished and turned aside worldly thrift, until poverty and over-population began strongly to be felt ; and such a change had taken place as made the village a contrast to what it had been before.

But other and greater distractions were yet in store for the once happy people of Oldwood.

CHAPTER V.

A SCENE.

THE inmates of Orton Hall had retired to rest, as mentioned in a former chapter, with minds soothed into hopeful reference to the morrow, which was expected to bring those for whose presence they looked with so much impatience, or at least to produce accounts of their present safety, and promises of their speedy arrival. That morrow dawned placidly. Lydia Orton rose refreshed and confident; and by the time the family mustered to breakfast, the sun shone out warm and vigorous, and the whole party met each other with cheerful faces and congratulations, bespeaking the inward satisfaction with which they welcomed each other's presence, and hailed by anticipation the pleasures of the new day.

After breakfast, Mr. Orton felt so confident of the arrival, in a few hours, of his son and Mr. Stavely, that he proposed to Mr. Jarman, and even to the vicar, that they should beguile the intervening time by a ride as far as they might feel disposed, upon the road by which the young gentlemen were likely to be proceeding at that moment to the Hall. This plan was exceedingly to Mr. Jarman's taste, as giving him an opportunity of seeing this part of the country, in which he was now become much interested, and as the very employment which was most congenial to his rambling disposition and habits of curiosity.

The proposal was no sooner made, and the horses ordered, than Helen Spencer began to look wise, and to play off several strange remarks, which were enigmatical to the gentlemen, but evidently of a mischievous tendency; the effects of which were seen in the restless look and un-

intelligible manner of Miss Orton. The fact was, that the lively tormentor had instantly perceived in her cousin, a strong and impatient wish to accompany her father and his friends, in the hope of meeting Louis Stavely; but a wish that she could not bring herself to express at that moment, and which she dared not trust to Helen, from dread of her wit. Miss Orton rose up, and sat down, and went to the window to look out, and returned, and tried to appear as if at her ease; until Mr. Jarman, without noticing her anxiety, gallantly expressed a wish that she would accompany them, which was instantly seconded by her partial father. She accepted the offer joyfully. Helen, of course, could not be left behind; and the arrangement was soon made for a regular riding party of all present, excepting Mrs. Orton, who proposed to take a drive to captain Hallam's, their neighbour, at Mervale, about three miles off, as she had long

owed a visit to his lady, besides having various important topics to discuss with her since the arrival of the new parson in Oldwood.

The exciting bustle of preparation for the road, of booting and spurring among the gentlemen, and of riding-habiting among the ladies, being accomplished, the impatient horses were brought to the great entrance, and the party mounted for their excursion. The elderly gentlemen, that is to say, Mr. Orton and the vicar, set forward, crowing, as we might say, with gaiety, and laughing heartily at Mr. Jarman's jokes upon what he called their cavalry-like appearance; and the ladies, particularly Miss Spencer, wild with youthful spirits and delight at the anticipated events of the day. The heart of Miss Orton throbbed as she passed the lake, and thought of the delightful, indolent rambles round its irregular margin, and through the wild dells at its upper end, which she had enjoyed a few years ago with Stavely, then in the romantic

warmth of early youth ; and she almost trembled to meet him, if she really was to see him to-day, lest the lapse of years and foreign travel should, by possibility, have altered his feelings, or even estranged his mind from her.

But the serene beauty of the morning, and the hilarity of the whole party, would not suffer the intrusion of an unpleasant thought. The grounds of the Hall through which they passed looked charmingly ; the old oaks, under the large limbs and darkening umbrage of which they occasionally had to ride, filled the owner, and even his daughter, with pride ; and the irregular clumps and partial lawns successively engaged Mr. Jarman and the clergyman in learned discussions upon the picturesque, and profound comparisons between the merits of different styles of scenery. But when Mr. Orton led the way towards Oldwood, and Mr. Jarman found that their road lay through it, he could not contain expressions of satisfaction at the prospect of “ reviewing,” as he

said (loving still to talk in military phraseology), that which he averred always interested him ; particularly as he had now in his company those who could descant upon every object, respecting which his romantic partiality for an English village might induce him to inquire. Every thing about it was to Mr. Jarman delightful. The quiet and rural seclusion of its situation, as it appeared at a distance; the straggling, irregular “disposition,” as he said, of its houses, which he compared to a skirmishing party in a broken wood; and, as they entered, the very three-gabled shape of the houses, and their small diamonded windows, pleased him, and the black oak timbers in the walls, contrasting with the white-washed ground into which they were wrought (like as in the old houses on the continent) in angles and parallelograms perfectly unparalleled, giving an idea of mathematics run mad, were all to his entire satisfaction.

The sight of a riding party so numerous, hav-

ing three of Mr. Orton's servants bringing up the rear, passing through so solitary a place as Oldwood, was of course an occurrence of great interest to the villagers. The men were at every door, and the women and children at every window, and the dogs of every degree were out among the horses' heels, barking bravely and perseveringly; making the horses caper about, and raising a clamour which seemed to disturb the quiet of the very old church, which echoed the noise. Great was the curiosity, and various were the opinions, of the occasion of this procession. The presence of Mr. Oxford, mounted like a cavalryman—a proceeding so foreign to his habits—gave an instant colouring to the conjecture, that this must be another religious crusade for the benefit of the village; and as Mr. Jarman looked more like a nobleman than my Lord Overly, he was immediately set down for, perhaps, a duke; coming with some determined purpose upon the religion of Oldwood. Mr. Perry, the apothecary,

around whom a crowd began to gather for consultation on the present remarkable event, and whose opinion was of much value from his opportunities of acquaintance with the diseases of the great of the neighbourhood, saw clearly into the whole matter. He said that it was well known squire Orton was no favourer of the religious politics of the new parson, and was a steady supporter of the ancient faith of the village. He was happy to see that the good old Mr. Oxford, who had baptised and confirmed him, was not going to be physicked out of the place by the injudicious administration of such a prescription of ginger and scammony as this Mr. Allmouth was to the village; and he ventured to add, that he had of late entertained strong doubts, from the symptoms that appeared all about, that the aggregate mind of this community was in a sound and healthy state. "Moreover," added Mr. Perry (whose father, poor man, had been a

broken-down gentleman), "although I seldom venture any opinion upon such dangerous matters as religion, I must say, that I perfectly agree with Mr. Groom, the bookseller (who, although he cannot pretend to the advantages of birth as *I* might, if I chose to allude to such a thing, is allowed to be a most sensible man), that Mr. Oxford's is a more gentleman-like religion than Mr. Allmouth's; that there is more real piety in it; and that it is more plain and suitable to his patients (I mean his parishioners); for indeed I must confess, that the new parson puts every one who swallows his prescriptions into a sort of brain fever."

But all the sagacity of the apothecary was lost, and turned against himself, when it was perceived, as far as perspective would hold out in watching the motions of the party through the village, that they did not even stop at the Clynch Arms, nor any where else; but had already quitted it by the

common road, and were by this time mounting a rising ground on the side opposite to that on which they had entered.

“Humph!” grumbled a lump of a bystander; “I’s thinking, measter Perry, that ye’re mistean this time, for there are the gentles clean past the Clynych, and out at the east end already; an’ they ha’ nou’t o’ religion in their heads, as few o’ the gentles ha’ ony time. So I’s believe, measter, that ye ha’ better skill o’ physick than faith, any how;—ha, ha, ha!”

This speech, which a year ago would as soon have been made by the same countryman to the king or the squire, or any other of the awful powers that be, as to the decent village apothecary, who was justly considered one of the small gentry of the neighbourhood, was in these last days so conformable to “the spirit of the times,” that it was joined in by almost all present, who ventured to aggravate the laugh at the mild man

of physic; while he stood, like any other remnant of gentility, looking almost as loftily as a small Coriolanus upon "the mutable rank-scented many," who thus publicly flouted him, to his great astonishment: for it never once occurred to the unchangeable self-respect of this amiable shred of a gentleman, that "the spiteful vulgar" would dare to treat him thus, from any possible combination of causes. Most of this "Hob and Dick" crowd, however, had made such progress in knowledge of "the great truths" under the spirit-stirring evangelizing of Mr. Allmouth, that the gentle apothecary was left far behind, and even gave offence by declining controversy when fairly challenged to it; but this was the first occasion when the spiritual pride of any of his neighbours, or their rising contempt for his opinions, fairly broke out in his presence.

As he stood watching the cavalcade from the Hall, winding forwards on the road beyond the

village, his chop-fallen courage began to revive ; and, moved by the desperation of the case, the apothecary retorted upon the learned villager, saying :

“ I confess, friend Hobson, that I am better acquainted with my own business than with the business of the parson ; and wish I could say the same for you, and several others present. I am not disposed to get into an argument with you here in the street ; but you may bear me witness, that I have lived and practised in this village of yours these thirty years or more ; living in harmony and peace with you all ; until within these few months, that I am become afraid to open my mouth, lest I give offence. Now, I blame no one, and you may think of yourselves what you will ; but I tell you freely, that there must be something wrong, when this is the case among friends and neighbours. I am glad to perceive that I was mistaken in my conjecture, and that squire Orton and his friends have passed the

village without any such purpose as I at first supposed; for I humbly think we have had enough of that sort of thing of late; so, as I am a man that loves peace and good understanding, I shall wish you a good day."

The little crowd stood in doubt for a few minutes after the quiet apothecary had retired to his shop, and then dispersed, to discuss separately the cause of the cavalcade that had passed; while a few stragglers went to the shop of David Groom, just mentioned, wherein one or two others lingered, occupied with discussions somewhat similar. The principal person in the shop of the village bookseller was Mr. Hanby, the great London director (of whom more anon), whose carriage stood opposite David's door; but it being hidden from the other group by the winding of the street, this second great event was only as yet known to a few. This Mr. Hanby, being at present in retirement from the engagements of business and public good works in the

metropolis, found here a necessary and agreeable resource in worming himself into the religious gossip of the place. But, leaving him in most condescending discourse with David Groom, we return to Mr. Orton and his party.

On the side of the village where the party travelled the road ascended considerably, and winding through rich lanes that skirted the extensive pleasure-grounds and plantations belonging to the demesne annexed to Clynnch Castle, which rose dark and stately among the woods; brought the party to a sort of ridge, leaving a plain to the right and left of considerable extent, which was open around to the admiration of the travellers. A slight breeze had now sprung up, to relieve the heat of the morning; the sun was riding in his strength, yet the warblers of the woodlands abated not their enlivening melody; and the fresh perfume of the country was diversified constantly by a succession of the various

field fruits of the earth, which were now, or lately had been, gathered into the garner, or the outer store of the husbandman. The plain was crossed on all sides by that profusion of hedges and stately planting which gives such richness and grace to English scenery; and here and there an imbosomed farm-house and its appendages; which, with the whistle of the ploughman by the way, and the exuberant neigh, the wild startle, and playful race of the horses grazing in the meadows, as the party passed; added that life and animation which is only wanting to give effect to the feeling of pleasure created by the scene. A blue hill, or rather a ridge of them, skirting and diversifying the horizon, was not wanting, to set such men as Mr. Jarman poetizing; and the peep of a spire here and there out from the wooded and well-enclosed pasture lands, or a village church, standing in solitary purity on some green rising

ground, added the idea of religion to the holy purity of rural life, and seemed to the fanciful to make righteousness and peace embrace each other.

Among this sort of scenery the party journeyed, sometimes allowing the spirit of their horses to seduce them into a hand-gallop, which Mr. Jarman called a charge of cavalry, and in which he assigned to each person his post; and sometimes waggishly drawing the sober clergyman into the office of general of division, and making him give the word, and head the charge, to the great diversion of the rest of the party. As the day advanced, and those whom they expected to meet were looked for with some anxiety, they beguiled their apprehensions by every sort of light and amusing chat; sometimes comparing themselves to a company of "lordlings and ladies faire," going forth to hunt in the greenwood, or "wandering the wold," in quest of adventures, "of pleasaunce

right merrie;" (Mr. Jarman being, of course, the squire of dames); and sometimes to the Canterbury pilgrims;

"A compaignie

In felawship,—and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Canterbury wolden ride:"

and Helen Spencer was the "Nonne"—

"That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;"

and the grave clergyman was the "Clerk of Oxenforde"—

"That unto logike hadde long ygo.

As lene was his hors as is a rake,

And he was not right fat, I undertake.

Of studie toke he moste care and hede.

Not a word spake he more than was nede;

And that was said in forme and reverence,

And short and quike, and ful of high sentence;

Souning in moral vertue was his speche,

And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

And as for Mr. Jarman, he would be nothing

but the “Frere, wanton and merry;” and protested, that from ladies’ lips at all times

“Ful swetely herde he confession ;
And plesant was his absolution.”

At length, Helen Spencer, who was most forward in the cavalry exercise, as she called it, entering into Mr. Jarman’s humour with wild spirit, suddenly held up her whip at the head of the party, and gave the word, Halt ! with such military effect, that every one imitated the prompt example of Mr. Jarman, who was second in command, and reined up instantly, wondering what new manœuvre their lively female commandant was going to put them through.

“Eyes front !” she exclaimed : “don’t you see our friends coming ?”

“No,” said the gentlemen, “we see no one.”

“Don’t you see them, Lydia ? your eyes ought to be as good as mine.”

"Indeed I don't!" said Lydia, looking out: but she could not look steadily for sudden agitation.

"There are a string of horsemen on the side of the rising ground just before us. Don't you see them, gentlemen? their heads bobbing as they ride, over the hedge which conceals the horses. You are a bad general, Mr. Jarman, if you cannot reconnoitre at a distance."

"I do see a number of riders coming out. Yonder they are. But I fear, my dear lady commandant, that these are not our friends: they look more like the procession of the Forty Thieves from this point. They are too numerous to be those that are expected at Orton Hall."

In this manner they debated. But as the travellers drew nearer, the party from the hall perceived them to be gentlemen; and, by the help of glasses, they concluded with joy that they were no other than the youths whom they had gone out to meet; but, as they approached, they were

found to consist of eight persons ; a number greater than they could account for. Both parties seemed eagerly to reconnoitre each other, as the strangers came up. A turning in the road concealed the latter ; while the party from the Hall waited for them in a convenient and tempting recess, where the hedgerows formed a sort of bay in the bank, at one side of the road ; and where they allowed their horses to tread on the green sward, beneath some tall beech trees. A hectic throb of anxiety, mixed with apprehension, crossed the breast of Miss Orton, as she loosened the rein of her steed, and listened to the approaching tramp of the horsemen. They turned the angle of the road. Three young men appeared foremost, with eager looks. They presented the well-known faces of *both* her brothers, accompanied by Mr. Stavely.

The travellers surveyed the party from the Hall with looks of pleased astonishment, and rushed in among them with agitated warmth.

Hands were grasped, and exclamations of joy and affection passed rapidly. Lydia's emotion was such that she with difficulty retained her seat on the animal; and, the hearty embraces of her brothers, with the warm salutation and inquisitive looks of Stavely, now glowing with the passion and moving in the dignity of manhood, while the old gentlemen almost wept with joy, and the less interested persons on both sides surrounded and witnessed the whole,—formed a scene which long after dwelt in the minds of all present.

A stranger gentleman from Scotland was now brought forward, and introduced to Mr. Orton, by the name of captain Templeton. He was intimate with the young gentlemen, and now joined the general party, which prepared to set out together towards the Hall; and the former party being now joined by the four gentlemen and their servants, made altogether, as Mr. Jarman said, a squadron of light cavalry, of which he

would be mighty proud to take the command. Mr. Orton, in the fulness of his heart, having introduced that gentleman to the boys, as he called his sons, by the appellation of colonel Jarman, on whom he at the same time passed many encomiums, they all unanimously agreed to put themselves under his orders while "on the march;" as, from the number of the party now, the plan on which the body should "debouch" had become of some importance.

Mr. Jarman, with proper tact, arranged that the front line should consist of Mr. Stavely, beside Miss Orton and her eldest brother; next Helen Spencer, "flanked" by Alfred Orton, the younger of the brethren, between whom and Helen it began from this time to be suspected that more tenderness existed than had at all been thought of: the next line consisted of Mr. Orton, Mr. Templeton, Mr. Oxford, and the ex-colonel at the head: the whole followed by the servants, forming two lines, to bring up the rear.

Short appeared the road, and fleeting the moments, which brought this joyous party near the abbey tower of Oldwood village, so dear to the sight of all, and now so interesting to those of the young gentlemen, who had been absent from the neighbourhood for several years. The stately turrets and extended woods and lawns of Clynn Castle, every rood of which was so familiar to the recollection of Stavely, were observed with much interest; and not less so the now opening glades and shining lake of Orton Hall, the mansion of which sat proudly facing them in front of the woodland, as if waiting with patriarchal interest and hereditary hospitality to welcome its present and future owners and their friends.

Mr. Orton, as they drew near, despatched forward two servants; one to the Hall, to have every preparation made "for the proper entertainment of this goodly company, agreeable to the hospitality of his house, and conformable to the importance of the occasion;" and the other

to his trusty and right well beloved neighbour and friend, captain Hallam, R. N., who was worthy to meet such travelled men as Mr. Jarman and Mr. Templeton; and who, he was sure, would accept this short invitation to join the company to dinner on this happy day; as for many years the captain had been his right hand man when any great event in the family called for joy and festivity; and he was convinced that he had still some far-off stories to tell that he had never heard, or, at least, that the company to be present had not heard; and the very laugh of the captain would make a company merry at any time. Great was the astonishment that such a cavalcade, passing through Oldwood, created in the villagers: but the faces of the young squires, and of the heir of old Arthur Stavely of the Castle were soon recognised, and blessings and admiration filled every mouth.

It would be difficult to say which enjoyed most pleasure and pride among this party, as

they proceeded to the Hall; the younger part in meeting each other safe, and now in easy conversation together, or the elder in witnessing all this, and in their own society. As they left Oldwood again behind them, a gentleman came up, also on horseback, and observing the party, apparently with much interest, bowed slightly to the clergyman.

“Pray, who is that?” inquired Mr. Orton. “I think we passed him to-day early before. If he is a gentleman living in this neighbourhood, you would do me a favour to introduce him, and ask him to favour us with his company to-day. I shall rejoice to see every good soul in my house, to partake of whatever the Hall can provide; for I would *extend* the happiness I feel *myself*, Mr. Oxford.”

“I am well aware of the feelings that I have always known you to possess, sir,” was the clergyman’s reply. “The gentleman who passed is called Mr. Hanby.”

“I think that must be the name of the gentleman who bought the late Mr. Strickland’s property. By all means use your interest, Mr. Oxford, to get his company on this occasion at least. He is a respectable person I doubt not, and lives at—at Trueby, I think they call it, only about a mile off.”

“The place used always to be called Trueby; but Mr. Hanby has taken some pains to spread the new name he has given it: he calls it Mount Carmel.”

“Mount Carmel! Mount Carmel! What does your friend mean? Is he a Jew?”

“No, sir: he is highly spoken of as a religious man, who, they say, is incessantly doing good wherever he goes. I have not the honour to have him for a friend, as you would intimate. He is very busy about the village with religious schemes and gossip, and is a sort of patron of Mr. Allmouth.”

“Humph! We’ll talk of no disagreeable subject for this one day, Mr. Oxford, if you please; and I think we’ll neither trouble Mount Carmel, nor the valley of Jehoshaphat, just at present. Come, Mr. Jarman, you had better give these ladies and gentlemen, under your command, the word. Remember the hungry hour is near at hand; and I venture to say, some of these young gentlemen have been hungry these two hours. *Allons!*”

When the party arrived at the Hall, they found captain Hallam and his lady already waiting for them; and the good gentleman, after viewing them, as they approached, with his favourite telescope, a habit which he had learned at sea, descended to the entrance hall, in perfect astonishment at the number of the company.

“What, in the name of all the points in the compass, and all the signs of the zodiac, is this, friend Orton? Where did you capture such a

fleet? Why there won't be stowage for all these, my friend, although your house may be a first-rate."

"I'll find stowage for them all, as you call it, captain; and for yourself too, if you happen to stow away more of the contents of my wine cellar than your usual quantity, on this happy occasion:" and without further words, he introduced the naval commander to the party: the whole then retired to dress for dinner, and the enjoyments of the evening.

Let no one say that a banquet is not an excellent thing, when people are not bilious: nor attempt to speak evil of fish, and venison, and pheasant, and fricassee, with an occasional hobnob of hock or Madeira, when folks are hungry, and determined to enjoy themselves. Neither let any one make little of good-humoured faces of men, and laughing lovely glances of ladies' eyes, when the wax is lighted up on a dinner table of an evening, after a shaking and sharpen-

ing ride of a week's continuance ; and when one has regularly come to anchor at his father's fire-side, or at that of as good a friend, and is determined to make himself as miserable for one night as the circumstances and the presence of one's best friends, all alike disposed to be miserable, will admit.

How this party enjoyed themselves this night, and what interesting and delicious talk Lydia Orton and Stavely had in the drawing-room ; and how Helen Spencer flirted and laughed ; and what long and laughable stories were told by captain Hallam and Mr. Jarman ; and what fooleries the younger folks acted before all was over, because, they said, they were in a country-house, and that it was just carnival time,—we must leave to the imagination of the judicious reader.

CHAPTER VI.

COMMON OPINION.

It is now necessary, not only for the better understanding of our history, and of the connexion that is often found between important events and the trivial actions of paltry persons, but also for the satisfaction of those students of human nature who feel an interest in contemplating it in those circumstances in society, where the feelings and notions of men put themselves forth with a genuine strength and fearless bluntness; such as are not to be expected in circles where refinement and high polish has subjected every word, and even look, to incessant restraint, and prescriptive training; or that we crave attention, for a short space, to the characters of some of the hitherto obscure persons in the vil-

lage of Oldwood; and that the good-natured reader may even condescend to follow one of them for a time in his vulgar adventures in “the good cause.” These persons and incidents may serve to elucidate the manner in which persons, in all respects low, sometimes come to bring about events which deeply affect the feelings and fortunes of their betters in the world.

There were two persons, besides those already noticed, who came at this period to be prominent in the public eye of our village and neighbourhood; one of whom was the Mr. Hanby, the late purchaser of a small estate, which he chose to call Mount Carmel, as mentioned in a former chapter; and the other was an honest brick-maker; whose case, however, we take up first in order, as he was designed to do mighty works, and produce huge effects upon public opinion in Oldwood, the small beginnings of which it becomes us carefully to trace.

On the outskirts of the village lived a man

named Thomas Creevy, farmer and trader ; who, finding himself well in circumstances, and that he had good clay on his land, took to the art of moulding the same into bricks ; which articles, as Oldwood was rising in extent, and increasing in population, began, at this period, to be in considerable demand. Now Thomas being a man of some substance, and having had it hinted to him, some time prior to this period (on the occasion of the triumphal entry of Mr. Allmouth aforesaid, into Oldwood), that his presence would be looked for that day in the great room of the Clynn Arms ; seeing that it became every well-wisher of the church to step forward in the cause of religion, &c. &c. ; and the result being, that, having shown face, and set himself in that front rank, where men of substance naturally place themselves, and being greatly respected, “ there and then,” by persons who had never noticed him before, and who patronised the new evangelical doctrine, he was induced to go, on the first Sunday

after, to pass judgment on the merits, doctrinal, devotional, and rhetorical, of the new divine, and reviver, as that gentleman arrogantly styled himself, of the real doctrine of the church of England.

Novelty in religion has an irresistible charm in a country place, and came particularly recommended to the villagers of Oldwood, as springing out from the bosom of the church herself, to which, from the judicious teaching of Mr. Oxford, and their long-felt regard and reverence for its suitable forms and services, they were as yet strongly and sincerely attached. Mr. Creevy was of course mightily pleased with the new preacher: his ears were tickled, his reasoning faculties, such as they were, were stimulated, his heart, as he believed, was softened, and he was uniformly edified by the quickening doctrines of Mr. Allmouth: although afterwards he sometimes felt a twinge of something disagreeable, as he recollected the happy Sundays long gone by, and

the mild and benevolent precepts and practical instruction of the religious preceptor of his youth, who was, in himself, the very personification of elevated religion, and a daily illustration of those maxims which had formed the new convert's original character.

But this well-disposed brick-burner was fast becoming a *new man*, in more respects than one. His riches, and his knowledge of what he took to be religion, were both increasing; and it would surely be too much to expect of human nature, that *he* should possess both these advantages and not know of it; as either of them are generally found sufficient for the ordinary measure of men's vanity. Mr. Creevy, from this time, began to labour less and to reason more. He thought, of course, that every new light he saw, and every new discovery he made, was of greater and greater importance to himself, and an ignorant and supine world; and he found much success to attend his occasional ministrations to his brick-labourers,

until he began to remark, that their conversation hindered them from rendering him the full tale of their work, and caused them to make free, and even to argue and dispute his opinions; and this his worldly wisdom would not allow him to encourage, even in the good cause.

This man had a brother, an honest wool-comber, who lived in the large and busy town of Donchester, about thirty miles off, where he had exercised his calling for many years with fair success. It was our brick-maker's practice to pay a visit to this brother every second year, to divert his mind and enlarge his understanding, by hearing the improved news of the great town, and seeing the admirable novelties of the shop-windows. Although, at the time we are speaking of, his visit was not due for nearly another year, yet his recent acquirements had rendered his mind overcharged and restless. He found the people too slow of heart to believe him, and his sphere of usefulness too circumscribed, in the con-

finement of a country village, and he determined to spend a short time in the great town where his brother lived, that his opportunities might be more extended, and that he might at least show the wool-worker the true light, and peradventure might convert him and all his house.

Having, therefore, set his household affairs in order, he departed forth, big with high purposes and important intents towards mankind; solacing himself with various just considerations about not hiding his light under a bushel, and other reasonings, which enhanced more and more his own consequence to himself: a natural and happy state of feeling to an ignorant man, of which it is almost pity to deprive him.

It was on a Saturday night, after a solitary ride, which gave him opportunity of dwelling in imagination upon the astonishment his brother would doubtless evince, when he should perceive his newly acquired spiritual gifts and Scripture knowledge, and should be made to acknowledge

the irresistible nature of the arguments on matters of faith, which were pent up almost to bursting in his changed mind, that Thomas Creevy arrived in the industrious town of Donchester. When he got to his brother's house, he was informed that the trader in wool, having finished his week's business, had gone to his club in an inn in the next street, to meet with a few substantial tradesmen and others of his neighbours, who, time out of mind, resorted at least once a week to the decent parlour of the house, to watch over public events, and enjoy the superior home-brewed of the establishment. Mr. Creevy was anxious to meet his brother ; but he was not quite sure that it was right to go to him in a tavern, and there perhaps to talk of religious doctrines ; and he did not now care to talk of any thing else. Besides, there was the consideration of throwing pearls to swine : but again he thought that this might be nothing but carnal and cowardly reasoning, and a temptation of Satan to shut his mouth,

when he was ready to indite good matter ; and “ who knows ” what good he might be enabled to do, and how he might electrify the consciences of the ungodly men, with whom his brother passed the precious evening ?

Thither, therefore, he went ; and found his brother seated among a company of respectable-looking persons, whose talk and merriment seemed to give them much enjoyment, and whose shrewd and manly looks, and bantering mode of conversing, appalled our man of doctrines for a time, and made him feel a littleness in his momentary estimation of himself, that was extremely unfavourable to his own success, in impressing these sinful men with the awful danger of their spiritual condition. His self-importance was further shocked to find that his appearance and grave looks excited no particular notice in the merry company present, who seemed merely to regard him as a country-man, whom they must treat civilly on his brother’s account ; and even his

brother expressed more surprise than pleasure at seeing him ; asked him to sit by him, and inform him if any thing was wrong, or what on earth could have happened, to bring him to Donchester at the present unusual time and season ; hoped the family at Oldwood were all well as usual, and that his little nephew, who was named after him, had begun to say his letters, and to fill up his first pair of gray breeches.

Mr. Creevy replied with a serious gravity, which drew the attention of the company to him, “that he praised God they were all in their usual health, and in a thriving way ; and that, from the particular favour of Providence, displayed in his own behalf, he was enabled day by day to turn yellow clay into still yellower gold, which however was nothing but dirt and dross to the precious ——” But here his courage failed him, as he saw the eyes of the company turned to him ; and he stopped short, and looked confused, like an actor who is imperfect in his part.

“Go on, Thomas, man, that I may understand thee,” said his brother, aloud: “I think thou ha’st got a cast—go on, and tell us thy news.”

“I have no news, brother,” he proceeded, with self-complacent solemnity. “I meddle not with matters which are in the special hand of God. In short, the only news I have to tell you regards the great and thorough change which hath taken place in my own mind.”

“And what *change* may have taken place in thy most rational mind, Thomas, man? I never knew thee to have much mind of thine own, particularly since thou took to thyself a wife—I suppose she must have got a twitch in her mind too. But tell this honourable company what it’s all about, Thomas.”

“Don’t speak so loud, James, if you please. The subject is too solemn to be scoffed at. I have got to see of late,” said the Oldwood missionary, with laughable importance, while the

company, thinking they had got an original character among them, gave an attentive ear, "that I have been ignorant, and miserable, and out of the way all my life, until lately; as is likely to be the case with you all; that I knew nothing, but was like a wild ass's colt, feeding on the sapless husks of error, and glorying in my shame: but thank God, that sent a worthy clergyman to our village, where there has been such an awakening as you would not believe; for, by his means, I have undergone an entire change, to a state of grace and light; and have been enabled to see things, and to hear things, James, which would make thy very ears for to tingle."

He ended, not a little pleased with his courage and his eloquence, which began to wax bolder and bolder; while the wool-comber, looking at him for a minute, as if to assure himself that the man before him was actually his born brother, at last burst forth into an obstreperous fit of laughter, which shook almost the very windows

in their frames, and in which the rest of the company now thought themselves at liberty to join; until a general roar of merriment almost choked the whole, and terminated in a *finale* of coughing most trying to the lungs of this ill-bred circle of scoffers and sinners.

“ Let me break my pipe o’er thy illuminated head, Tom Creevy ! I shall positively split my jaws and my red waistcoat with laughing at thee ; ha, ha, ha, ha ! Religious mad, as I declare !— Well, I always thowt, Thawmas, that thou wert a born ass, or ass’s colt, as thou sayest. I thowt thou would distinguish thyself by some out o’ the way piece of simplicity.”

Poor Creevy bore all this with something like christian patience. Indeed, in the end, “ the old man” so far got the better of him, that he began to sympathize a little with the feelings of the party, which had so lately been his own; and actually joined the laugh against himself, to his

own great discomfiture, and that of the impressive things he had prepared to deliver.

“ I hold it to be very profane of you, gentlemen,” said a dry sarcastic little man, with a peculiar cast of eye, in a corner of the room, “ to laugh so incontinently at the religious illumination with which our worthy friend from the country has been favoured ; or to talk of his species of madness in that broad unguarded sort of way, which is the very treatment calculated to aggravate the symptoms and increase the malady ; for he may turn round upon us without a word of reasoning, and say, ‘ It is not I, but ye that are mad : ’ a most alarming sign and symbol of confirmed insanity.”

“ Thawmas ! what say’st thou, man ? ” said his brother : “ Art mad in earnest ? ay, or no ? Speak another speech to us, that we may give a verdict upon thy departed reasonable soul—for thou surely once had one : out with it, man ! ”

“ I hope, brother, I am not to be held up,” said poor Creevy—but his mouth was parched, and he took a gulp of the home-brewed before him—“ as a madman to a set of people, who evidently have”—another gulp—“ no knowledge of the word of God, and, forasmuch as—in fact, gentlemen, I am a changed man, and you must either be changed too, or you will evidently—”

“ Come, friends,” said another of the company, beginning to feel for the torture of the simple man, whose very natural endeavour at proselytizing had been so unceremoniously treated, and all of whose cogent and convincing arguments and quotations stuck fast in his throat ; “ this loud laughter at the religious notions of any man is no argument whatever, and evinces little of that spirit of toleration which is the glory of our age, and in particular of this harmonious society. I will only join in the laugh against the honest stranger, in so far as to ridicule

the unseasonable zeal of introducing religion here in any other than a very general way, over our Saturday night's cups."

"I protest strongly," said the sarcastic doctor at the end of the table, "against the most incipient symptoms of seriousness at this hour of the night. Was it ever known in the memory of the oldest members, that a sensible, or a least serious word, was ever spoken in this club on a Saturday night after the clock struck nine? I tell you, gentlemen, if you begin to talk seriously now, and particularly of religion, the very existence of our society will be shaken to its very foundation. Besides, I love to hear myself talk as well as any of you, and I have not half done with the subject of madness, which, in this present enlightened age, I take to be a most needful subject of discussion."

"Have you any suspicion, doctor," said the wool-comber, slyly, "that you have yourself had a visit of any particular madness? If so, stand

up and reveal your experiences, for the special benefit of my crazed brother, who is an admirer of all sorts of *lapses*: or, if I am encouraged, I will take you in hands, and prescribe for you myself; I have an excellent horsewhip at home."

"Gentlemen," said a round-faced, lusty man, "if you are disposed to make experiments on madness, I propose that the doctor, whose religion has, I fear, dwindled to a mere penny-weight, be shut up for a fortnight with our new friend from Oldwood, who evidently has some to spare; from which treatment I should expect the most beneficial results, from the known tendency of extremes to meet and embrace each other."

"On my word, friend," said the doctor, "I am most willing to submit to your proposal; and granting that I may have myself a slight sublimation of any prevailing madness, for the world is generally afflicted with one sort of contagious craziness at a time, the very consciousness of

being condemned to hold converse with a religious illuminati of the present day would do much to exorcise me: but I flatter myself that, if there be only a slight bottoming of rationality in the disordered brain of my brother patient, I will so build upon it, and so extend it, by a very simple treatment, that I should soon extract *his* religion out of him by the roots, as I would a troublesome tooth. But the difficulty lies in planting rational religion in any man, without a good deal of knowledge along with it, if once his mind has been turned aside in its natural reachings towards simple, moral, and religious truth, and has been bewildered in the ever changing dogmas which some impiously graft upon the much abused name of religion."

"Good night, gentlemen," said one or two, rising; "you are beginning to talk religion, and it's time to be off."

"Gentlemen, I crave a bumper to a useful

old gentlewoman, called Common Sense," said one, "and I think we ought to hear the doctor out; he always speaks sensibly."

"Common Sense!" said the wool-comber: "come, Thomas, swallow it down; although it be bitter to thee, it will do thee good. Hast any philosophy in thee? as the fool says in the play."

"Playhouses and philosophy! ah, James, I grieve for thee!—these are Satan's chief means for ruining the world."

"Now, Thomas, I petition thee to give us a word of common sense, just for a change, if thou hast a remnant of it in thee."

"I think," said the brick-burner, "it is at least needful sense to say, that there is among this company, and worldly men in general, as I am grieved to observe, a strange reluctance to talk on the most interesting of all subjects, namely, religion; which can only be accounted for from the influence of—"

“The devil, I suppose—ha, ha, ha!” interrupted his brother: “isn’t that it, Thomas?”

“You are perfectly in the right, my friend,” said the doctor; “but as one evil is often productive of twenty, persons of good sense avoid talking of religion; because it is not religion, as such, that zealous people are most inclined to talk of, nor morals either, but some irrational cant, implying a thousand abominable absurdities, that disgusts men of knowledge—or some questionable controverted dogma, or some non-essential belonging to some particular system to be believed; made up by the microscopic ingenuity of weak or interested men, upon which people of understanding ought never to attempt to reason, and upon which experience has proved they will differ more the longer they discuss them, to the end of time.”

“Bravo! doctor,” said the wool-comber, showing symptoms of the strength of the drink; “but I thought you had known your business

better than to speak intelligible sense to an unfortunate patient like my brother. Give it to him in 'pothecary's Latin, so that he won't understand it. He will like it the better."

"But I did not know before," continued the doctor, "that the ranters, or jumpers, or new Jerusalemites, had found their way to your village. It is pitiful that human nature should be so besotted!"

"Ranters and jumpers, sir!" answered Creevy, proudly: "no, no, sir; it was a respectable clergyman of the church of England (for there is a great revival of true religion in the church lately), and this zealous, gifted man, was brought in and backed by a great lord, one lord Overly, and a great saint he is, and he has lately had a change himself—and he made such a speech in the Clynn Arms, about religion and the French revolution, such as never was heard in Oldwood."

"God forgive the church of England all her

sins !” exclaimed the little doctor, breaking his pipe against the grate, in great wrath. “ If the church continues to give her countenance to these crazy religion-fanciers, we shall have a revolution of our own, a religious revolution, that she will be sorry for : the whole world in this mad nation is turning itself into joint-stock companies of religion, and every sucking fool must make speeches and splutter controversy—Bah !”

“ Oh ! sir, you are an ungodly man !” said the new missionary, shaking his head.

“ And the very clodpoles of the village ! the Gibeonites of society ! coming to wag their heads at us, and to expound religious controversy—set on by a faction of the church of England ! I shall positively forswear common sense for mere contempt, and turn preacher and quack doctor, until the dark ages come again !”

“ Doctor ! I never thought you were a hypocrite before,” said the smooth-faced man, enjoying the passion into which the little surgeon had

wrought himself. "You may talk in your usual way in this room; but I see your name down for a guinea donation, flourishing in the Report of the—Auxiliary Society."

"What! my name down in the Report! are you serious, sir?"

"I give you my word," said the smooth-faced man, "that there it is, name and surname, among other respectable names in Donchester. You are regularly down for a saint, doctor, and you'll get gain by it—it was well laid out money! a good spec.!"

"Upon my honour, gentlemen, I must clear up this matter for my character's sake," said the doctor, in such earnest, that his leer or squint was aggravated beyond the gravity of the listeners. "You must know, that it is not necessary for me, like Dean Swift's man John, in the Tale of a Tub, to stand at the corner of the street, and beg of the people to kick my hinder parts as they pass, in order to obtain persecution on

account of religion. I am a man living by a public profession; and I assure you I have lost of late two of my best patients (they were hypochondriac and bilious), because I refused to attend and show face at one of their annual meetings of some society; but without being quite sure that my money was rationally or beneficially laid out, I *did* give a guinea to these very people, for the sake of peace; taking their solemn word that it should not appear against me, as I may call it. And now, to think of my name being in their lying Report! You may believe me, that I am plagued fully as much as any of you with one religious dun or another—penny a week ladies with frosted noses, and hairs straggling about their chins, and vulgar, hungry-looking sanctified men, with papers in their hands. I expect nothing less than to see the two national universities pulled down by the religious mob, and huge conventicles and committee rooms set up in their places.”

“ I take them very easy,” said the sleek-faced man. “ I go to church as I ought, and pay many a pound when deserving people are in want; but these hypocritical beggars never get a penny from me.”

“ Thawmas, man, cheer up!” said the comber; “ we’ll have no more religion to-night, if you please. We’ll get as much as is good for us to-morrow in church from parson Sommers. The very sound of my parson’s voice has religion in it—the dear, good soul!”

“ I am sorry I can’t go with you, brother. I know the doctrine of parson Sommers very well. He is quite wrong in his views—he doesn’t preach the real orthodoxy.”

“ Damn thy doxy! I wish thee and she were at the devil!” said the wool-comber, angrily. “ If thou thinkest thyself wiser than such men as Mr. Sommers, I give thee up—thou’rt no brother of mine.”

During the latter part of this conversation, a

stranger had entered the parlour, which, although the public room of the inn, was usually occupied exclusively by a certain company, some of whom remained now present. The strange man figured about the room, rung the bell, sat down with his back to the others, without noticing any one, pulled a newspaper to him, drew his hat over his eyes, and looked sulky, and so forth, in the usual way that an Englishman proves to what country he belongs, and shows his independence. This person, although looking as unsociable as possible, seemed to prick up his ears when he learned the subject that occupied the company, watched the speakers from under the broad leaf of his hat; and his face being opposite to the brick-burning Creevy, while the latter testified before men against the orthodoxy of the clergyman, he gave Creevy a look, which greatly imboldened him to speak up and spare not in this ungodly assembly, as he thought it expressed perfect approval and encouragement.

“I will not countenance by my presence,” said the brick-maker, bravoingly, in answer to his brother’s threat, “the damnable doctrine of parson Sommers, nor any other enemy of the truth, if I should never see thy face again, brother! But I testify in this profane company against the miserable doctrine of good works, and all such refuges of lies, which brings no consolation to poor lost creatures. I shake the dust off my feet against you all; for you have done nothing but laugh at me this whole evening;” and so saying, he looked at the stranger, who nodded approbation as the speechifier was about to leave the room in the heat of his strong indignation.

“God help you, poor man!” said the little doctor. “I was about to offer my services in bringing you back to your senses by a little carnal reasoning, before the disease had gone too far, and your madness became rooted; but I must, I fear, leave you to yourself, until, perhaps, one

absurdity, physicking off another, may at length by the force of nature effect a cure, if your brother, Mr. Creevy," he added, addressing the wool-comber, "is not naturally of an obstinate temper."

"Obstinate, doctor!" was the angry answer. "Did you ever know an ass that was not obstinate? He'll stick to what gets into his head until the devil's buried, I warrant him."

"I shake the dust off my feet as a testimony against you all!" cried the Oldwood farmer, shaking his great leg, with a tacketed shoe at the end of it, and left the room, from that day the sworn enemy of his brother and all his family, and all the profane and regardless inhabitants of Donchester.

A pause of a minute or two followed this angry scene, during which the company stared at each other. The wool-comber thumped his fist on the table, drew his mouth up almost into his nostrils,

and looked round him without saying a word, as if his chagrin and vexation could not be expressed.

“Ha, ha, ha!—hum! ho, ho!” laughed the sleek-faced man: “Well, that is very amusing. Don’t put yourself out of the way about a crazy brother, friend Creevy. There will always be plenty of fools to plague the world; but I take these things very easily.”

“I am very sorry for you, friend Creevy,” said the little doctor, “if this matter, or that wrong-headed brother of yours, was worth an instant’s serious concern. But I cannot help taking more thought about this mania for abusing the minds of ignorant and weak persons, by discussions and controversies upon points which the deepest intellect can make nothing of: since the painful case of my nephew, poor Charles Oliver, it makes me sad to think of it in the merriest moment of my life.”

“But Charles Oliver was a fine youth, and a

scholar, if I remember right," said the wool-comber; "not like this shallow, ignorant Hottentot, to whom I am unfortunately full brother; and Charles did not thrust religion, or rather his own notions, into your face every moment. He used to walk solitarily past the end of my garden with a small Bible in his hand, and two or three of his fingers keeping places between the leaves of it, while the other youngsters were playing cricket in the croft below: it would have made you melancholy to look at him. Poor fellow! I always said he should be made a parson."

"I always said the very contrary," said the surgeon: "for besides that by assuming religion as a profession, he would have had no other employment to divert and strengthen his mind, he would then have been likely to turn fifty others as melancholy and mystical as himself, and thus spread the evil in society which is already so aggravated. Besides, the next thing he

would have done, would have been, if he did not continue obstinately to disturb the tranquillity of the church, to have left his living, and turned methodist, or Sandemanian, or anabaptist, or something else, until, perhaps, he might end with turning professed infidel, which is only a branch of this wretched sectarianism that is harassing the land."

The stranger with the broad hat here gave a hem or two, and fidgeted on his seat, as if preparing to take a part in the conversation.

"I think we have been well edified with religion for one night," said the smooth-faced man, rising to depart. "Mr. Creevy," he added, "don't let us have any sectarians, if you please, into our club. I have not spent so unsatisfactory a night that I remember these twenty years since I have met my friends statedly in this room. I shall not be able to enjoy the sermon to-morrow, for thinking of your tiresome argumentation;"

and so saying, the smooth-dispositioned gentleman left the room, without the complacent murmur of happiness and good will which usually accompanied his parting good night.

“But pray, doctor, what *did* become of Charles Oliver?” inquired the wool-comber, thoughtfully. “I never heard what became of him, although I have missed him from the town for many a day. Pray where is he now, sir?”

“Do you wish me to tell you?” said the doctor, frowning, as if he would reprove the other for making an inquiry that he thought impertinent.

“I do not wish you to tell me at all, sir, I assure you, if it is disagreeable to you; but I feel interested to know something about Charles; for I like the youth.”

“Well, sir, if you must know,” said the doctor, fiercely, “he is in the asylum for lunatics!”

“God have mercy on us, sir! say you so?”

“Yes, Mr. Creevy, it is true—too true! Lost to himself and to society, to which he gave every indication of being an ornament.”

“The Lord have a care over us!—and all through religion!—and did not old Miss Dellman, the sister of the anabaptist parson, lose her wits in the same way?—she was always pondering about election and predestination, poor soul!”

“Indeed, my friend, this subject always forces me to be serious. It is little wonder I feel alarmed, when I see fanatic zeal leading to irrational and often dangerous inquisitiveness, about matters beyond the province of humanity, and a prevailing hypocrisy and cant in pretending to approve of these absurdities; and the very phraseology of silly enthusiasts patronised and cried up by many belonging to our dignified and learned church herself, and bandied about by every empty upstart who seeks for this ignoble distinction. Why, sir, we are a nation of jan-

gling sectarians; a Hudibrastic errantry of religious jousts; a generation of perverters of God's noble work, the human mind, playing shuttlecock with the sacred themes of religion, until men of sense are obliged to cant, and dispute, and talk hypocrisy, in self-defence; and Common Sense runs off, with the dogs of fanaticism barking at her heels; to which even genius and intellect are obliged to cower for the sake of peace and reputation; since the aristocracy of the country are pleased to lend their influence to please the saintship of the vulgar! I hate such things! It's as bad now in the nineteenth century, as it was in Hudibras's days, when—

‘divinity had catch’d
The itch on purpose to be scratch’d.’”

And the old surgeon rose and left the inn, muttering the remainder of the lines:

“ ‘Or like a mountebank did wound
And stab herself with doubts profound,

Only to show with how small pain
The sores of faith are cured again ;
Although by woful proof we find,
They always leave a scar behind."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF A MAN SEEKING AFTER
THE RIGHT WAY.

WHEN Thomas Creevy found himself alone, at the door of the Swan inn in Donchester, he walked about the street in great wrath at his brother and his ungodly associates, who would have none of his controversy, and laughed his conversion to scorn, after he had been at the pains to journey thirty good miles entirely for their own good, and other great purposes.

But reflection succeeds as naturally to passion, as a storm is succeeded by a calm ; and, anon, a feeling of regret began to qualify the fierce wrath of the farmer, which arose from the nature of the man—the proverb words it “ the nature of the beast ;” for it occurred immediately to him, that

in quarrelling with his brother, he was doing something to the injury of his interest ; in short, he was losing the benefit of *his keep*,—a good jockey phrase,—with all the *et ceteras* connected therewith, in his brother's comfortable house, for the time of his sojourning in Donchester ; which, by subjecting him to the extravagant expenses of an inn, would make this rather a different gospel speculation from what he had contemplated ; for assuredly he had not intended that it should take any thing out of his pocket. Another thing he regretted was, that he had not picked up acquaintance with the slouch-hatted gentleman before he left the public house, for that person had evidently the very look of God's own people, who were so valuable in this perverse generation ; and now he was left alone in the streets of a large town, like a sparrow on the house-top, and no one to speak a word of comfort to him in this his hour of tribulation in the good cause.

In this affliction he fortunately remembered that there was a woman, whom he had known, who kept lodgers in the town, and in whose house he could sojourn, on this present occasion, for at least a moiety of the charges of inns and taverns, and other resorts of the regardless and ungodly. This woman he further recollected to be pious and godly, to the best of his knowledge; but as she could not but be ignorant of various knotty points of doctrine, which *he* had been enabled to see in the clearest light, since the providential advent of Mr. Allmouth into Oldwood, and as this woman had albeit a comely and well-favoured daughter, “who knows,” thought he, “what a change I may be enabled to effect in the family?”

Hither accordingly, even at this late hour, hied the farmer, ruminating as he went, whether he should first discourse to Mrs. Evans, who kept the lodgings, upon faith in general, or faith in its

particular application, usually called the faith of appropriation, and thence diverge into the grand subject of election, final perseverance, &c.

This last plan pleased him well, and he meant to adopt it for the present, considering judiciously that there might be sufficient in these subjects to occupy the attention of him and his future pupils on their first sitting at this hour of the night.

He soon found the door, and it was opened by Mrs. Evans's daughter, modest and comely as ever the farmer had seen her, who welcomed him to the town and to her mother's house with much unaffected cordiality. Upon his being introduced into the parlour, and mentioning his business, the mother was quite pleased to have him for a lodger, upon his brother's account; but made many apologies for the bed and the apartment into which she was obliged to put him, from the circumstance of her having charitably offered it that very afternoon to a reduced lady and her daughter, whom Mrs. Evans had known in

genteel circumstances, but who had arrived in the town in deep distress and in sickness; being from these causes unable to proceed on her journey to London. "But, I am sure," continued Mrs. Evans, "you will excuse my giving you the best apartment, when it is put to so good a purpose; for I assure you, Mr. Creevy, the poor delicate lady cannot offer me a farthing for her lodgings, supposing I were willing to take it."

Mr. Creevy seemingly acquiesced; but he did not understand all this. The lady might be very good, but he did not see why the best bed should not be given to him, in preference to her, who could not pay for it: for Creevy was a man who loved nothing equal to himself at any time, unless it were his own way and his own opinions; and these being part of himself, he loved them jealously and doggedly, because they were his own. But as for the lady's distress, he thought that a very suspicious matter; for he had often heard

Mr. Allmouth and his religious friends say, that almost every one who pretended to distress were impostors, or at least that they had brought distress upon themselves; and at all events he could not see how Mrs. Evans could pretend to be charitable, since she was not far removed from distress herself. However, a man cannot always be wise and cautious, and it became him who had gone forth in the good cause to suffer tribulation; so, being gradually reconciled to his quarters by the comely looks and kind inquiries of the daughter, and the anxious bustle for his comfort of the mother, he got into good humour, and resumed his benevolent intentions for their spiritual good.

He commenced the work of faith and labour of love, by entertaining the two women with the news of Mr. Allmouth's arrival in Oldwood; from which he slid into the subject matter of his preaching, and the great change he had wrought; went back upon Moses and Aaron, and down through the prophets and apostles, until you

come to the apostle Jude and the Patmos Revelation. In this extensive range of discussion he found his eloquence greatly helped by the ale he had drunk in the public house, and was delighted to find a willing, at least a silent, audience to these great and important truths. But, if we must tell the plain facts, Mrs. Evans (although loving the very semblance of religion) found, with regret, that she could not get the good out of Mr. Creevy's most instructive discourse, for it was Saturday night, and she had many things to look after which quite distracted her attention ; and as for her daughter, during his "long speaking" her eyes were closing up with sleep ; and while he was exclaiming about the "foolish Galatians," she found her mind wandering about her new bonnet with orange ribands, which to-morrow would be the first day of in church, and which the milliner had assured her surpassed any thing that had hitherto appeared, even from London itself.

Next morning Mrs. Evans and her daughter consulted together respecting the fortunate circumstance of their getting Mr. Creevy for a lodger, for the sake of the unfortunate lady in the first floor; "For," said Mrs. Evans, "I am sure she can want for nothing so long as this good pious man is in the house; for you know religion teaches us to feel for the distresses of others, and to relieve them to the utmost of our power; in short, to bear one another's burdens in this changeable world: and I have no doubt that Mr. Creevy, who himself says that he is rich and prosperous, will not only assist her while sick, but leave for her as much money as will bear the cost of her journey to London. Good soul! what would the world be if it was not for religion?"

The daughter, although not so confident, thought it highly probable that so righteous a man, and one who had at his fingers' ends subjects, of which she had never heard even the

names, would be liberal to the poor lady ; and the two agreed to sound him upon the subject at breakfast. The simple woman was greatly imboldened to this, and quite sure of the success of her application, upon hearing the good man talking so gratefully over his breakfast, of the blessings of Providence and the happiness of those who could enjoy such salubrious tea and toast, in addition to the far more valuable blessings of the gospel which was next after to be set before them this Sunday morning ; and how much he pitied the Indians abroad, and other infidels, who enjoyed neither the one nor the other ; and that we should give our last farthing to extend spiritual and temporal blessings to our fellow men, all over the world : in short, he said it was incumbent on us to count nothing our own that was intrusted to us for the furtherance of the good cause, and the good of others, and, in fact, that we should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Mrs. Evans's eyes sparkled with pleasure as she heard these benevolent sentiments, and she immediately with great feeling stated the case of the lady above, who was a widow left with an orphan daughter, and now reduced to the utmost distress from being unsuccessful in a small business, by which she had, in the midst of sickness and despondency of mind, tried to support herself and child. This appeal was warmly seconded by Miss Evans, who, seeing the brick-maker's humour, described the lady as being, in addition to the qualities of an amiable and genteel woman, truly pious and exemplary in her duty at church, &c., as she had formerly known her; and she had not the least doubt that Mr. Creevy, to whom a small sum was as nothing, would rejoice in the opportunity of relieving and serving a lady who had always been a valuable member of society.

The two women, however, were rather chilled on perceiving the coolness and austerity of look with which their visiter heard all this. In truth,

we must not hide from the reader, that while his host and her daughter were speaking, the man of controversy was seeking in his mind for reasons and texts of Scripture by which he might parry so direct an application to his pocket; for, indeed, he thought it very inconsiderate and abrupt in these women, to turn his general remarks and the beautiful *words* of Scripture at once upon himself, in reference to a person that he knew nothing about. He did not, however, condescend upon any very direct answer, but bowed pleasantly, and said, certainly he was most willing to take the matter into consideration, particularly as Miss Evans reported that the lady was pious; but it was nearly church time, and he must hasten to church, or probably to meeting, as he much feared that he might not meet in Donchester any of the ministers of the establishment who preached to sinners the real word of life.

He went out immediately, but did not go to church, although Mrs. Evans and her daughter

did ; for as he drew near to one, he perceived a number of well-dressed people crowding to it, and at once concluded that the word of truth could not be held forth in that place, for in that case the fashionables would not go near it ; and that if he could see a place where the lame, and the blind, and the halt went, he would be more likely to be fed with the real nourishment of the gospel. He wandered about, thinking of the wickedness and blindness of the world, and tried several places of worship on his way, but could not abide any of them. A methodist chapel door stood open invitingly, and the farmer entered ; but the preacher murdered the doctrine of free grace so sadly, and so patched it up with good works and miserable morality, that he left that place at once in disgust. He was about to try a church next, which came in his way ; but as he stood deliberating, the organ sounded, and the voice of praise rose up within ; but this he did not altogether like, for he had read somewhere

the opinion of some one, that instrumental music was not warranted by the word of Scripture, and he thought the very sound of the organ had something Babylonian and popish in it.

He still wandered on, musing on the power of the devil and Satan, who had got so much the upper hand of the world, and wishing he could meet with the slouch-hatted man ; when another church stood before him in a very clean and quiet place, which he thought had a more orthodox look than any he had yet come across. He put in his head, and found the sermon was begun, but he soon came out again unable to stand it. “ It was a very fine-spun oration,” he said to himself, “ and full of pretty sayings of man’s wisdom ; but as for the doctrine of Paul in the eighth chapter of the Romans, or the great epistle to the Hebrews, the man seemed as ignorant of them as blind Bartemeus, and one might as well go at once to hear a Universalist or Unitarian.”

We have heard of a religious sect called *Seekers*, to which the reader will be apt to liken our odd friend, as he took another walk on the search for the true gospel, and at length perceived a place of worship, to which the lame, and the blind, and halt, and maimed of all sorts were flocking; and now he thought he had lighted upon the spot where the true doctrine was taught. What was his horror and astonishment to find when he entered, that on the whole floor of the building there was not a single seat, but that the area below was filled with a crowd of poor, ill-clad people, who were on their knees in most devout attitudes; and that, in short, he had got into a popish chapel! A man requested him to take off his hat, with which he reluctantly complied: another whispered him, that the mass was in performance, and that he ought to go down on his knees; he complied with this passively, as an ox goes to the slaughter: a small bell rang, and a poor woman offered him

one side of her prayer-book : a buzz of response went through the multitude ; he looked to the further end of the building, and the priest, in his robes, and with a cup in his hand, was kneeling before an elevated crucifix, &c. ; the music sounded, and the organ, joined with youthful voices, produced an effect that was almost sublime.

Creevy, carried away with the effect of circumstances and example, repeated with the poor woman the prayers and responses : “ Let my prayer be admitted into thy presence, O God ! If thou be angry with me, to whom shall I have recourse ? or whose assistance will avail me * ? ” When he had repeated these words, the solemnity and appropriateness of the petition struck him with fear : he was on his knees, and the crucifix was elevated before his eyes ; was it possible that he had “ bowed the knee to Baal ? ” that he was worshipping graven images ? that he was pray-

* Prayers of the Missal.

ing with idolaters in a catholic chapel? Such was the interpretation he put upon his present devotion. He sprang to his feet, and rushing out of the crowd, found himself once more in the street.

He wandered about, disturbed and unsettled. He was wretched, and self-condemned; and he could not account for it. He was an ignorant countryman, to whom religion, as such, was both a necessary and a pleasure, but whose mind was incapable of receiving or using mystical dogmas of theology; whose opinions were like those of the savage, who thinks that the sun rises every morning out of the sea. Yet these wretched opinions the ignorant religionist thinks of the highest importance; and to gratify the self-love founded on them, he had run the round of a populous town this Sunday morning, and found no one to agree with him, till the natural and spontaneous devotion which was necessary to his order of mind, got vent in the chapel of a form of religion most repugnant of all to his feelings

and notions. A little knowledge, say some, is a dangerous thing. Whether this be true or not, a little controversial theology undoubtedly is. The virtues, the simplicity, and, we may add, with respect to such as he, the happiness of ignorance, had been taken from him ; and a partial and unsuitable knowledge, a few of the unintelligible dogmas of religious bigots or enthusiasts, in addition to the vices of knowledge, and the impudent casuistry of imposture, had been grafted on the barren ground of his limited mind ; choking the natural growth of country virtue, devotion, and duty, and making the poor peasant a new man, to the disturbance of society, the misery of himself, and the execration of common sense.

Wearied and out of humour with himself, the farmer at length retired to his lodgings, where he found the women returned from church, who instantly, in accordance with the curiosity of the sex, inquired of so religious a man, what place

of worship he had thought worthy of his presence this morning. After some unsatisfactory and blunt answers, it came out that he was unable to find any to his mind ; and, in fact, had been nowhere. The women looked at each other, and recollecting that he had waved the subject of relief to the poor lady, the daughter determined she would put him at once to the proof, by repeating the request in terms less delicate than in the morning. The man replied that certainly, as Mr. Allmouth often said, "it was our duty to do good unto all, especially to those of the household of faith;" and he should undoubtedly do something for her, if he found her such as she ought to be ; and accordingly expressed a wish to see her.

Mrs. Evans immediately in her zeal ran up stairs to signify to the lady the wish of the wealthy man ; well knowing that wealthy men's wishes are not to be lightly treated. The lady, however, after asking a few questions regarding

the pious intended visiter, did not seem at all beside herself with joy; and, after a few minutes' consideration, refused to see him; although thanking Mrs. Evans most gratefully for her good intentions and offices.

While the landlady was above, Mr. Creevy was meditating the form of sound words which he should address to the lady; and was perfectly thunderstruck at the pride and regardlessness she showed in refusing to hear the real gospel from his lips; particularly as she was likely to be so much in need of it. Mrs. Evans excused the unfortunate lady, by dwelling on the delicacy of her health, and the impropriety of a stranger seeking admittance into her bedchamber; and said that if he meant to do her a service, or a charity, *she* would give him every satisfaction, as much as if he had conversed with her regarding her history, her misfortunes, and her character.

Mr. Creevy, in the days of his ignorance

(although a man of the narrowest intellect), would have been likely to have parted with probably a pound or two, for the love of God and common charity, as he used to say, to a person circumstanced as the unfortunate lady was; but now, as he was a new man, when at a loss he usually acted by the example of his betters, who were new men long before himself. He, therefore, recollecting the words of Mr. Allmouth on a similar occasion, replied, that nothing required greater caution and wisdom than giving away one's money; that Christians, being known to be charitable above all others, were constantly beset with demands on their pockets; that the worthless and improvident were always seeking money; and that the claims of God's house, and the good cause, in all its different branches, and praiseworthy institutions, generally demanded all that Christians could possibly spare from the suitable comfort of *themselves* and families. In fact, he added, he wished to judge with the ut-

most charity ; yet he could not but observe, that the woman's refusal to see him, and to hear the word of truth out of his mouth, bespoke a state of mind of the most deplorable nature, and in that showed that she deserved nothing at his hands.

“ And do you mean to give the lady nothing, sir ? ” exclaimed the young woman indignantly.

“ I did not say that, miss,” said he, calmly ; “ I hope I shall always be ready to do my duty, as I have been taught by my spiritual fathers ; although it is evident the woman does not deserve it ; ” and he fumbled among his pockets, and brought out some papers.

Was he going to give a bank note ? “ I hope it will be at least a five,” thought Mrs. Evans ; “ he is a good man I see, after all.” She took an offered paper ; the daughter almost pulled it out of her mother's hand, in her eagerness to look at it ; and besides, he laid a piece of money on the table.

The paper was a religious tract !

The piece of money was sixpence !!

Reader, had you seen the group ! The man, sitting before a table, his two legs spread out, and his hands thrust to the bottom of his pockets, holding fast his money ; and the two women standing at each side looking down upon him with dumb contempt.

“ That is a most valuable morsel of gospel-food, ma'am,” said the worthy man ; “ tell the lady to digest every line of it. It is more precious than the gold of Ophir.”

“ If it is so precious, then it is too much for you to give away,” said the daughter, letting it fall contemptuously into the man’s lap.

“ And, indeed,” said the mother, making the sixpence spin off the table, “ this money is too great a gift from so pious a man. I am really ashamed of your charity, sir ;” and they both walked out of the room, leaving Creevy in amazement that, having acted his part in imita-

tion of his betters so much to the life, both in respect of argument and action, these two women, who were evidently ignorant of every thing good, should have treated him so severely.

He now found himself avoided, and wandered about all the afternoon, solitary and unhappy. At night, when the crowds filled the streets, and moved in every direction to the different places of worship, he again went into several without being *fitted* to his approbation. He at length went into a neat modest building, and a decent plain man bowed him obligingly into a green-covered seat, among well-dressed people. This was respectful and flattering. He liked the look of the clergyman, who appeared, however, a dissenter, for he read his prayer from a manuscript, and not the church prayer-book. But Mr. Creevy could not find fault with it, and it was uttered with a gentlemanly piety. The sermon commenced much to his satisfaction, although he could not see its drift; but he doubted

not, from several expressions, that it was coming round to the true meaning of the deep things of God; and as the preacher got into a region entirely above him, he was confounded and delighted. The company round him seemed most respectable and attentive, and an air of devotion and religious comfort reigned in the assembly, which, while the orator spoke of divine things, solaced his spirit, and disposed him to piety and gratitude. The night was thick and rainy without, which added to the feeling of comfort within: the seat he had been put into was soft with cushions, and shaped for ease. A luxurious drowsiness came over him as the lights glanced in his eyes, and the rain without pattered on the windows, from which he found himself so happily sheltered; and he gloried in spirit in the very sound of the word, which came so agreeably over his ear, as his senses got bewildered, and his eyes closed in pious sleep.

He dreamed that he was himself exalted to

the privilege of preaching to an audience pious and attentive, who seemed in raptures at the cutting truths he was enabled to utter, and the marvellous eloquence with which he spoke. Again he thought himself a magistrate, or a justice, or some such great character; thundering forth reproof and punishment on trembling offenders, and imprisoning this, and sentencing the other, with all power, might, and dominion. He awoke amid these delightful visions, with the words of the preacher tingling in his ears: he girded up the loins of his understanding; and the concluding sentences of the discourse pleased him well, for he had no doubt but that it was excellent, if he had not rather lost a part of the previous matter. A hymn succeeded, and the singing of praise, even with the sound of the organ, wound up the whole with joy and gladness.

Our countryman never was more refreshed and edified: he left the chapel in good humour and comfort, eagerly inquiring the name of the

preacher ; for although he had not said enough on faith, nor was quite as luminous as Mr. Allmouth, still he evidently had the root of the matter in him. He talked farther to a man on whom he fastened, and inquired more. How was he horrified and dumfounded to learn that the present was a Unitarian chapel !

This discovery was a dreadful stab to his orthodoxy, his pious self-love, and his doctrinal penetration. Of what wickedness, he thought, had he not just been guilty ? As he ruminated on this disastrous day, he heard a group disputing earnestly ; and faith, and grace, and other words of a similar kind, were uttered frequently. Creevy's attention was of course drawn to the persons, and by the light of a lamp he perceived the face of the gentleman with the slouched hat, for whom he had looked so eagerly all day. He waited in the rain, and followed the group, to get speech of this person, in vain ; for the dispute tied them together, and engrossed the whole ;

and the hapless missionary from Oldwood, on retiring to Mrs. Evans's, and finding that there also he might shake the dust from his feet, when he could get any on them, for now no one there would listen to him; and that in this godless town he met with nothing but persecution and disappointment; he resolved to remove his candle from the midst of it, and return to his home on the morrow; making only this reservation from his resolution, that he would not hurry on the road: and as he had several villages to pass through on his way, who knows what opportunities he might still be favoured with to testify against the ignorance of the world?

CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHT READING.

THE visitors and family at Orton Hall, to which we now return, rose later on the morning of the day after the arrival of the new guests than usual, from the lateness of the hour to which the revels of the previous night had been prolonged; but they mustered to the sound of the breakfast-bell in the highest spirits, and saluted each other with gay faces, and merry recollections of last night's enjoyments. The company amounted to a little crowd, as Mr. Orton thought; so that he scarcely knew how he should hear himself talk among them all: still he should insist on the last absentee being waited for. Mr. Jarman was clear that the muster-roll should be quite complete; and captain Hallam, whose head

still swam a little from the effects of the previous night, insisted that not only every man should be piped to quarters, but he thought it not at all unreasonable that so effective a company should sit down to breakfast by signal, viz. the firing of a gun, which assuredly he should give orders for, were this party in his own house, where there was every convenience for military if not naval honours.

Every one will remember the occasion with pleasure when they may have breakfasted with a large jocund party in the country, on a fresh morning in the autumnal period of the year, in a lofty light room, with two gothic windows on one side, and a large one, having sundry devices of stained glass, at the end ; looking upon a rich green lawn, on which the sun shone out joyous and warm, and on a lake seen in the distance, amid the plantation, with its waters gleaming like gold in the sunbeams. The reader may also have experienced the feelings of a son sitting

down once more with the accustomed circle in his father's house, after an absence of years, amid those with whom he has lived familiarly from his infancy: and if so, the very look and manner with which he is asked and pressed to eat of this and the other good thing before him, by his parents and sisters, will come home to his heart: and on this occasion, even the well-remembered solemn voice of the old clergyman, as he prefaced the meal by the few well-ordered words of prayer and thanksgiving, was not by the brothers, nor would it by the reader, be thought the least touching and appropriate occurrence of the morning.

“By my word,” said Mr. Orton, as breakfast was nearly over, and feeling as proud as a king in the midst of his family, “young gentlemen, it would do one good to see you eat; neither your travels nor your last night's wine seems to have injured your appetite. Heaven save us

from famine, and all manner of cleanness of teeth ! as the Scotch clergyman used to pray."

" I believe this breakfast will never have an end," said Mrs. Orton, laughing. " My hand is never from the tea-urn. I suppose I may venture to compliment the young men and maidens on their good health," she added, with maternal pride ; " but I must not say a word of the good looks of the boys, else there is Mr. Jarman over the way, who at once will——"

" Fire a gun at you, madam," said captain Hallam. " I see he is on full cock at this very instant, for he has done breakfast ; and I perceive by his eye he has got a shot in the locker. I'll give the word, Mr. Jarman."

" And, whatever the honourable captain may discover in my eye," said Mr. Jarman, " suppose it to be a compliment to the bright eyes and happy looks of the ladies opposite to me ; I, like Mrs. Orton, must not indulge myself to ' let

it off" in the presence of these young gentlemen. Alas! the 'sere and yellow' is coming over me sadly."

"Don't talk so, sir: it gives me pain!" said Helen Spencer, with mock pathos.

"Indeed, madam," said Mr. Jarman, "I cannot help bewailing my bachelorhood; besides, the character of an old beau is, I fear, gradually fastening upon me; the bare idea of which I look upon with dismay. I must make a covenant with my eyes, like a certain old gentleman that I have read of, without delay."

"Lydia," said Helen to her cousin, "I am sure you will join me in a petition to Mr. Jarman, praying him earnestly, for the love of the ladies, not to retire to a nunnery, or a monkery, nor to do any other rash act, of which he is evidently in great danger; and all the gentlemen will add their prayers to ours. The dear despairing gentleman will make so excellent a *cavalier* that his loss to the ladies would be immense."

“ I will readily petition Mr. Jarman,” said Lydia, “ not to retire from our society, at least for as long a time as possible; but as for his undertaking any *foreign service*, as that of a *cavalier*, I will not advise him to offer his services in that capacity to *you*, cousin: your tyranny and talk would be beyond his powers and his patience.”

“ Thank you, Miss Orton!” said the ex-colonel. “ I am perfectly sensible that your witty cousin’s cavalier, or, vulgarly, dangler, would be no sinecure. He would have a sad time of it, poor man.”

“ Come, gentlemen,” interrupted Mr. Orton, from the end of the table, “ what are your plans for the day? The morning is too fine for us to sit here skirmishing our wits.”

“ Who will accompany me to the Castle?” said Mr. Stavely. “ I must go there and arrange with sir Hugh Salvage about his removal, and giving up possession; besides, I have not

visited the grounds of Clynnh Castle these six years."

"That is both an important and an interesting business," said Mr. Orton; "and the ride will be delightful, I believe, to the most of us. But, talking of plans, I have long thought of establishing a proper circulating library in the village. The stir about knowledge now seems to demand such a thing for the use of the people; and some general literature, diffused among that portion of them who are disposed to read, will tend, in my opinion, to correct and qualify the rage for religious inquiry and controversy that has been most injudiciously introduced among them by a new curate of the church, who, I am sorry to say, seems to have hit upon the most effectual method of driving the simple people from the church where their fathers worshipped, and turning the whole village into a bear-garden of squabbling sectarians."

"And is it possible that our village yonder has

got into this state?" inquired several of the gentlemen at once.

"It is so, to a considerable extent," said Mr. Oxford. "Although none that I know of have publicly left the church of England; yet as our church does not generally, I am happy to say, approve of the crazy mode of instruction which is adopted by Mr. Allmouth and his abettors, the people are now so excited with a spurious and ignorant zeal, that we shall soon, I fear, have the village made a prey of by all sorts of ranters and jumpers, and other enthusiasts, whose mode of preaching and doctrines are well qualified to make impression upon the simple-minded and necessarily ignorant mass; so that if general knowledge is not infused along with the mysteries which are harped upon by these mistaken men, to extend the conceptions and assist the newly awakened reasoning faculty, we shall have all the misery of religious bigotry, contention, and personal intolerance."

“ I shall shut myself up in Clynych Castle,” said Louis Stavely.

“ I shall fly the country rather, and become an absentee,” said George Orton, the eldest of the sons.

“ What will you do with Orton Hall, sir ?” said Mr. Jarman : “ you cannot take it on your back like a hand-organ.”

“ I am surprised to hear you talk so lightly, gentlemen,” said Mrs. Orton. “ I think Mr. Allmouth has very deep knowledge of divine things, and he is a most earnest man in explaining every thing which the people never understood before. I have always heard that religious knowledge never could be too highly valued.”

“ Controversy is breaking in upon us already !” exclaimed Mr. Orton. “ My wife will instruct us all at secondhand immediately. But the evil is, we shall all disagree, if we argue stoutly, and yet we shall all be right in our own eyes, until my house will become nothing but a scene of

strife, and we shall turn one another out of doors for the love of God and the truth."

"Heigh ho!" sighed Miss Orton, seriously.

"I think, if it would not be tiresome, madam," said Mr. Oxford, "that I could easily show you that there are some kinds of knowledge, particularly regarding revealed religion, that we have little to do with, and that we are perhaps better without; at least I could make this plain to you with reference to the lower orders."

"Could you, sir?" said Mr. Jarman, incredulously. "Your success with the ladies must be greater than mine has been—Heigh ho!" he added, imitating, and looking across to Miss Orton.

"But, gentlemen, don't you approve of the plan of the library?" inquired Mr. Orton. "It will be the means of diffusing the advantages and pleasures of knowledge."

"Not forgetting also its unsuitable refinements, and yearning discontents," interrupted Mr. Jarman.

“Yes,” continued Mr. Orton; “but books properly chosen may not have this effect. Besides, as I said, the people are likely to be more tolerant by being better informed; and, in short, I know nothing so likely to counteract the spread of sectarianism and religious mystification, as knowledge and a taste for literature.”

“And so, sir,” said Mr. Jarman, “you expect to add to the happiness and usefulness in society of the lower orders, by giving them extended knowledge, and, forsooth, a taste for literature. For my own part I expect no such thing, no more than I expect that every man is to become a gentleman, and that nobody will need to condescend to be servants, or that an Agrarian law is to make all men equal, and that we shall all be carried to Utopia in improved balloons. But suppose, my dear sir, that your plan were even to have these effects, the great body of the people would themselves refuse it. That sort of religious or superstitious excitement, if the people are in-

dulged with it, is the very food which is suitable to ignorant and contracted minds ; and you may as well think to feed a rabble of Irishmen on chicken-soup and macaroni, while they can get good rank bacon and savoury salt herrings, as to expect the rude villager and labourer (besides many in higher stations) will prefer rational and polite literature to the ravings of an enthusiast religionist."

"Here is a business !" said George Orton ; "that we are to sit here listening to an argument as long as a sermon (I beg your pardon, Mr. Oxford), instead of ranging the fields ; and the very morning sun looking down and crying shame on us !"

"Don't be impatient, George ; you know this is the hour for business," said his father, "and we may not have as full a meeting again to discuss this matter. What do you say about it, Mr. Oxford ?"

"I think, sir, there is much truth in the ob

servations of Mr. Jarman. Still I know not any better mode of correcting or destroying fanaticism than by means of knowledge and intelligence, if we can possibly infuse it; and the institution of a library of suitable books is as effectual a mode as any that I at present know of. But we will consider Mr. Jarman's further objections."

"I have no objections to your plan, gentlemen," said Mr. Jarman, "but I disagree with you as to its effects. A few minds will use it thankfully, and those will be enlightened and freed from religious bigotry; but the mass of mankind don't want knowledge; and will look with suspicion upon any thing intended to disturb their prejudices. They will not go near it, or in so far as they do so, rational literature will have less effect in a twelvemonth on their minds, than the rousing and alarming harangue of a bold and crazy spouter of theology will have in one half hour, appealing to the Bible, which they all have in their hands, and

out of which he will be sure to find passages to suit his doctrines."

"And what would you have us to do, sir?" said Mr. Orton simply.

"Do, my good sir! Have you taken upon you to reform the world, and to free the lower orders from prejudice and gullibility? ha, ha, ha! I congratulate you on your task, gentlemen," said Mr. Jarman.

"Any such undertaking, sir, would be quixotic and hopeless, I grant you," said the clergyman, gravely; "still I think it is our duty to do whatever seems best, to uphold the morals and guide the minds of that part of the community who look up to their superiors for instruction, having little opportunity of doing these things for themselves."

"A most virtuous and proper sentiment, sir," answered Mr. Jarman. "But popular opinion, particularly upon religion, is, you are aware, a

dangerous thing to meddle with ; and, in this respect, it is much easier to prevent the evil of fanaticism than to cure it. Our laws and public opinion are all turned against *the want* of belief, or infidelity, which seldom disturbs the peace ; and hence the prevalence of hypocrisy : while the most ignorant and worthless demagogues are daily allowed to practise upon the opinions, and feelings, and happiness of the people, by the most irrational and even pernicious dogmas, addressed to their *belief* ; and all beliefs are sacred but unbelief. I know not, indeed, how men of sense and virtue are to act, when the ignorant and hypocritical have the ascendancy, and have even got a party in our established church herself to countenance them, excepting you could treat such men as this Allmouth, as the West India planters did the jumper parsons, by summarily stoning them out of the place, which they have come to harass and disturb."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Stavely, "I heartily

lament the prevailing fanaticism ; but you know it is quite unpolite to talk religion before ladies, excepting on a Sunday. I therefore humbly propose that this debate be deferred *sine die*, and that as many of you as choose take a ride with me to the old Castle, where I hope we shall be able to make out some better amusement."

"And I," said captain Hallam, "being of sound mind and in my sober senses, praised be to God (saving the last wreck of a headach), do hereby request the honour of the company of every lady and gentleman present, who is pleased to accept of this short invitation, to dinner with me to-day. I'll have a royal salute fired as soon as Mr. Oxford has said grace, in honour of our three young friends, if you think the smell of gunpowder will not spoil the flavour of your dishes."

"Nothing can be more acceptable," said several voices.

"We shall board you in a body, sir," said

Mr. Jarman. "But pray you, is there no corner of property, no deserted estate, in this neighbourhood, that I could get to purchase? I want to get in amongst you, if I can get a good title for money to any tolerable Bungalow, or out-post, within twenty miles."

"What a pity it is you did not get Mount Carmel!" said the clergyman knowingly; "it is just next to the Clynych grounds, sir."

"Mount Carmel!" said Stavely, "Mount Carmel! I never heard of such a place. We don't live in Palestine. I don't like the name of the place; it is perfectly pharisaical."

At this moment a servant entered with a note addressed to Mr. Orton, enclosing a printed notice, as follows:

"A meeting of the inhabitants of Oldwood, and the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, will be holden in the large room of the Clynych Arms on Thursday first, the 10th instant, at noon, to take into consideration the propriety of establishing a

circulating library, for the use of the people of the village and neighbourhood; to which meeting you are respectfully invited."

Mr. Orton and the clergyman looked at each other with a strange confused expression; the younger gentlemen tittered, and wondered what was to come next; and Mr. Jarman burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"What is there in this so amusing?" said Mr. Orton, bravoingly.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! heigh, heigh, heigh!" was all that captain Hallam could get out, laughing and coughing.

"Here is your good work taken fairly out of your hands," said Mr. Jarman. "What signifies *your* zeal? it moves as slowly as a turtle, compared with the enthusiasts of Oldwood. I'll bet the price of a religious tract, that this handbill comes from Mount Carmel, ha, ha, ha!"

"It does, without doubt," said Mr. Orton; "for here is a polite note in the envelope from

Mr. Simon Hanby, dated Mount Carmel. *There's* a man of business for you! While we are sitting here, reasoning the *pros* and *cons*, he is in the field."

"Well, father," said Mr. George Orton, "you see you must be content to play second fiddle to this Bible director in the management of the lower orders. I tell you, if you want to show your good works or your zeal, it does not do to waste your time *reasoning*. These men never reason but upon the most effectual mode of raising subscriptions to forward their own plans."

"I don't intend, for all that, to be absent from the meeting," said Mr. Orton; "and I would advise you, gentlemen, also to be present, for it is extremely likely there will be some reasoning necessary; and if this prove, as I suspect, a sectarian cabal, I hope you will have the spirit to oppose it.—Come, boys, to horse! We have had enough of this subject for a time."

CHAPTER IX.

SOME ACCOUNT OF A MODERN EXCELLENT MAN.

A FEW days were spent by the somewhat numerous company at the Hall (for Mr. Orton would permit none to depart, except his neighbour Mr. Hallam, and the clergyman) in festive and diversified enjoyment. During this time the young gentlemen, accompanied by Mr. Jarman, rambled through the country for thirty miles round, in much the same spirit that any one, after a long absence, visits every room in his house, to see his old acquaintances, the chairs, and tables, and corner cabinets, and dusty pictures, as well as his steady friends, the portraits on the walls, from the frowning general, with his armour the hue of a blue slate, and his "dead flesh" coloured face, looking grimly through a

black cloud meant for hair, to the prim figure of somebody's aunt, and her dog;—all no doubt smiling on the very canvas in recognition of the returned youngster, on whom they had so often gazed with steady eye in former days.

Both of the young Ortons, as well as Stavely, rambled through castle and country in this enjoying spirit, and stood still, and drew in the healthy air at all the favourite peeps “on meadow green and mountain gray,” and saw many objects with increased favour from comparison with “foreign scenes,” making the usual remarks, which, if not very wise, were to them mighty entertaining, until tired horses and ravenous appetites sent them home to another species of exercise of a very needful nature, upon which they entered with much good will, and which, with the merry sequel, they heartily enjoyed.

Louis Stavely, however, amid his engagements at the Hall, and his business with sir Hugh Salvage, who had not yet left Clynych Castle,

found many opportunities of private converse with Lydia Orton, and renewed with her more than once those delicious rambles through the intricate paths near the lake; every knoll, and bank, and seat round which reminded them of some interesting circumstance of former years. Helen Spencer, too, had her own plans to forward, for she had effectually interested the younger Orton; but she, unlike her thoughtful and romantic cousin, was as wild as a fawn; and though she loved Alfred Orton more than she suspected, she was to him nothing but a constant banter, and indulged the pleasure of plaguing to an extent that was perfectly unreasonable in so rational a matter as love.

The meeting in Oldwood about the library, however, now approached, and the gentlemen looked for considerable amusement from the deep intrigue of village politics, and the serious contentions of petty ambition, which it was expected to develop.

“What would some among the better classes do for employment,” said Mr. Jarman, in a conversation on the subject, “if they had not the lower classes to play with like chessmen?—I mean, to exercise their benevolence upon. What a fine thing is benevolence!”

“I don’t very well understand you, sir,” said Mr. Orton; “but I see but very partial instances of benevolence, if I understand the term. It is the want of benevolence, and often of common justice, that I complain of. I need not say that I fish for no compliment when I affirm, that *my* tenants are very differently off under me from many I know; for they are neither squeezed in their rents, nor plagued with my influence upon their opinions, and they are in consequence grateful and happy. I can’t see the benevolence of men, of whom I know many, who seem to make use of the poorer class only as the lion is said to make use of the jackal, and who now and then inflict upon them their benevo-

lence, in the shape of experiments on their opinions, which costs them nothing, or 'soul service,' and directing them in the right path to heaven, forsooth, when to them, poor men, the *earth* is little worth the living on."

"Common-place, sir! quite common-place! Your truisms are very good, and you deserve a compliment, whether you fish for it or not, both for your real benevolence and for seeing as you see. You are all the happier yourself for it, sir, and so are your tenants and dependents; but you cannot be so young in the world, as to suppose that this severe and dignified lady, known by the name of *Truth*, of whom you seem so fond, is ever to become a general favourite with mankind; and you had better be very cautious how you attempt to bring her out among mixed society."

"With all my partiality for truth, I certainly love peace and quietness too, as well as any man; but would you advise me, sir, not to attend this meeting for the extension of knowledge, although

called by Mr. Hanby? Is not a well-selected library likely to be a useful thing in the village?"

"Certainly it may. By all means attend the meeting, my dear sir. *I* am determined to go, although I am but a bird of passage, perhaps; and if I don't get much amusement from the benevolent squires and grateful country-folks, I shall be disappointed. But from what you have told me, I humbly think that you will be able to do little good, even with your own views; for you will see it will turn out to be nothing but a vulgar show-off of sectarian zeal and illegitimate benevolence. Heaven help the unfortunate objects of benevolence, and wo to the scribes and pharisees!"

As the meeting about the library and subsequent events opened up many matters in society and opinion, which our young gentlemen, who had been abroad and moving in the best society, never dreamt were in existence, it may now be necessary to give some account of Mr. Hanby,

its prime mover, before we proceed to give a description of the great event itself.

Simon Hanby, esquire, of London, citizen and merchant, having got what commercial men call "a bargain" of the small estate of Trueby, near the village, and contiguous to the demesne of Clynch Castle, and being a great man in his way, and good to a degree that few could aspire to, came down to the country a short time after the religious revival in Oldwood, to take possession of his estate, to appear in church and market as one of the landed proprietors in the neighbourhood, to see what he could see, and to know what he could know (perceiving that in this quarter there was likely to be a prominent station for his own individuality), and being determined to be a great and a useful man in the country still more than it was possible for him to be in town.

Mr. Hanby's character is so common, that we feel somewhat put to shame in setting about describing it: yet he was a great man; for in this

commercial country all men who are rich are, in a certain circle, great men: and he was a good man; for in this most religious of all countries, all men who are publicly pious, and notoriously given to creditable charity and respectable good works, and who, albeit, can take good care of their money, are good men: and he was wise and clever; for all who have much selfish prudence, much bustle, and no feeling, are wise and clever. Still, in respect of standing, even among men of his own class, he was an upstart, from the lowest; and there are always a "rising generation" of upstarts coming forward to trample on the necks of those who, by the turning of the wheel of fortune, are thrown *out* of the track of prosperity: in respect of talent, he was a happy combination of Shylock and Mac-sycophant: and in respect of good deeds, or even a single act of real benevolence, his whole life was a lie; and yet he gave away money, and had much credit for benevolence, and all men spoke well of him, though many, connected with him,

clearly understood him; but these last were just such as himself, and "*dog eat dog*" is not consistent with our decent and conventional hypocrisy.

Mr. Hanby was ambitious, and loved personal distinction, and so do all great men; yet he soon perceived a shorter road to popular praise than the one through the exertion of talents and education (neither of which he possessed), and which lies invitingly open in the gullibility of the weaker and more ignorant portion of mankind, by the easy path of extra religion, public zeal, and palpable good works; and thus by pious perseverance in these ways of pleasantness, he, being in the meantime rich, worked himself into all plans and associations for evangelizing the world; became chairman of this society, and committee-man of the other, and ultimately an efficient director of that great society, the revenue and influence of which will hereafter cause it to be considered, perhaps, as the most astonishing,

wonderful work, as a medium of fashionable benevolence, concocted in modern times.

“What would the world be without religion?” is a triumphant exclamation; which, from the mouths out of which it is most apt to come, and the folly to which it is most usually applied, would almost betray any one who has a just reverence for the Deity, and some conception of what deserves the name of religion, into expressions of execration, if he condescend to notice it. It is as much as if the lawyer should say, “what would the world be without chicanery and injustice?” or as if the executioner should exclaim, “what would the world be without crime and condemnation?” Little minds and hard hearts, incapable of honourable feelings or elevation, on whom exclusively that clamorous sort of religion which constitutes modern saintship usually fastens, love so well to obtain their ends by *pretence*, and a circuitous hypocrisy, or by an unfair and terrifying influence over the

minds of others (for which the sort of religion we are speaking of seems so admirably adapted), and find its language so convenient, and its habits of thinking so mystically perplexing (because it so well accustoms the people to the edifying contrast between profession and practice), that we are constrained to exclaim, with the deepest contempt of their own language, while we may on a thousand occasions use it, "what would the world be without religion?"

Mr. Hanby soon perceived with inward pleasure, that in Oldwood he should have a wide "field of usefulness;" for, in fact, the good work was begun; and, as Mr. Allmouth expressed it, "men were running to and fro, and knowledge was increasing."

He first began by patronizing that reverend gentleman and his improved religion, at least until he had time to look round him, although he was himself a dissenter from the church, a "conscientious seceder," which is well known to

be the best religion for wise men of the inferior orders who have their fortunes to make. But he soon perceived that his new reverend friend would not do ; for, in regard to doctrines, Mr. Allmouth had too much knowledge, of what in the university is properly called *dogmatic theology*, and was too conceited of his knowledge, to be at all of a spirit sufficiently teachable for the deep purposes of our great director ; and the clergyman felt too independent in the powerful patronage of lord Overly, and the rector, &c., to admit of the interference or acknowledge the influence of this half dissenter and brow-beating commoner in the religious world.

Religious prominence and reputation, however, were to Mr. Hanby luxuries which were now become almost necessities of life, and he saw with concern, in debating which of the factions he would patronize, that Mr. Allmouth was too much flushed with success in his first religious campaign, and too apprehensive of a

lay dictator, particularly of plebeian origin, to care for his (Hanby's) questionable countenance. And the venerable Mr. Oxford having little spirit, and less taste, and too much dignity of character for Bible battles, and schismatic party-work, looked with much suspicion upon the cunning vacillation and obtrusive zeal of the pursy citizen. Hanby therefore determined, as liking the retirement of Oldwood, and meaning to make his new estate, which he was pleased to christen by the name of Mount Carmel, his summer residence, to take another and more ambitious course than he had at first intended ; for although the church of England was more respectable in the country than a dissenting chapel, and he might in it be introduced into better society, and although he had for these reasons intended to have been a churchman, if not entirely, at least while in the country, where a man could not expect to be suited to a *T*, in sectarian fancies, as he could in London ; yet finding ultimately, from

the above and other causes, which we cannot here anticipate, that he was likely to be nobody, or worse than nobody, as a member of the church, he determined, if he should be unable to put himself forward in connexion with it, to assert in due time the glorious right of *private judgment* upon matters of *conscience* here; also and, in conformity to this spirited plan, to hoist the standard of dissent, to which many would no doubt flock: and then he should have a party of his own, which, with proper management, might soon be recruited, and a chapel for them of his own building, which might be a fair and godly speculation in the rising village of Oldwood.

This plan, as he further meditated upon it, pleased him mightily; it was noble, and could not but be productive of great good to the cause of genuine religion, which every body knows, he said, is not taught as it ought by the church, particularly in places of comparative ignorance, as this evidently was; and he could have a

preacher to his own mind, and a chapel (the money for which might prove to be well laid out) of which himself should be the corner stone, pillar, pope, and leading director. 'This splendid resolution Mr. Hanby began forthwith plotting to bring into operation, when Providence, who had no doubt put these plans into the heart of his worthy servant, should fully ripen events. Meantime he saw meet to open the campaign with the plan of a religious library; a masterly manœuvre, by which he should bring himself into view; and while he felt the pulses of the neighbouring gentry, and saw how far they were inclined for *religion*, he should adroitly be sowing the seeds of a party, of whom he should still manage to be the principal *director*.

CHAPTER X.

OF A SORT OF PERSON WHOM ANY EXCELLENT
MAN MAY RUIN WITH IMPUNITY IN THE
COUNTRY, AND RECEIVE THE GLORIFICATION
OF THE SAINTS FOR HIS PAINS.

THERE was another person, who makes a sort of reluctant appearance in the forthcoming great events of the village, whose character was very different from that of either of the great Mr. Hanby, or the likely-to-be-great Mr. Creevy. This person, David Groom by name, was by way of respect usually called the Bookseller of Oldwood; and becoming involved in the deep intrigues of Mr. Hanby, it may be necessary to give a few words respecting his history.

Mr. Groom, some thirty years previous to this period, was a most respectable bookseller, in one

of the largest mercantile towns in England. We say most respectable, for the good disposition and accomplished mind of any man will gain him regard and respect *internally*, even from those who predict his ruin, in the scrambling competitions of trade, from the very qualities that naturally challenge respect ; but having set out in life with one or two mistakes in calculation, or rather peculiarities of character, very unfavourable for trading success, where competition is severe, he became almost inevitably what is called unfortunate. First, notwithstanding his observations, he could not bring himself to act in his business transactions with that jealous and grasping *selfishness*, or as it is qualifyingly called, keenness, which is so strongly enjoined by some successful traders as a matter of education, and out of which grows so many arts and stratagems, by which his competitors were able to catch money and get ahead of him in the race after mammon : and, secondly, he unhappily had a passion for

books himself, and a knowledge of their value, separate from the considerations of their sale, which led him into the error of keeping for sale and commending those which were really good and useful, and to take no pains to sell *trash*, as his competitors did. In short, his mind was before those of his customers, and above his business; an odd thing to say of one who dealt in the means of knowledge; but so it was: and thus being incapable of those mysteries of the craft, so general among modern men of trade, he, with a superior mind and the most virtuous conduct, was ultimately driven out of business and from his native place; and the world being all before him, he went forth to seek his fortune.

Fortunately for the worthy man, however, he had the sagacity to see the real causes of his failure, and that he had no chance in circumstances of keen competition, and the strife of commercial selfishness; but, could he find a quiet village, where luxury and *refinement* had not

made such progress, where men retained still some simplicity of character and content of mind, and had not yet been *civilized* into a species of money-cannibals, ready to eat each other for gain, he might support his family in moderation by fair industry, and, as he expressed it himself, might live a “quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.”

In the course of his Lot-like flight, he was struck with the retired situation and romantic beauty of this village of Oldwood, and in it he soon set himself down, and found encouragement; having humbled himself into a sort of general shopkeeper, and although still dealing in his favourite articles of luxury and utility, viz. books, new and even old; his stock was of course of that miscellaneous character requisite for the better order of people in the village, and consisted of broad-cloth, hardware, gloves, green tea, and, as Caleb Quotem would say, other groceries.

But, during a residence of five and twenty years, David had not only enjoyed much humble happiness, but had won golden opinions from the as yet unsophisticated inhabitants of the village. His good sense and moderation, his quiet humour and unostentatious information upon almost all subjects, with his known integrity and his orderly and respectable demeanour, made him an universal favourite, and general referee when disputes arose; so that his real influence was of more weight than that of any man in the neighbourhood, except it might be Mr. Oxford, the vicar, who was only called in upon great occasions.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that the new religious leaders in the village should have done their utmost to get such a man as Mr. Groom to be on their side. Mr. Allmouth first plied him hard with controversy and sanctimonious flattery, appealing strongly to his *conscience*, to get him detached from Mr. Oxford, and the original

faith of the village ; and afterwards Mr. Hanby, like a man of the world, tried him with promises and prospects of religious-book business, the importance of office in the forthcoming auxiliary societies, and condescending but vain invitations to Mount Carmel. But David was now in easy circumstances, and having always been inexorable in his independence and self-respect, would now scarcely condescend a reply to these mean intriguers. The storm of religious warfare assailed him on every side in vain ; for his shop, like some barrier fort, was in the midst of the seat of war : yet no one could obtain the satisfaction of moving him from his first faith, or of gaining him over to their new-formed or interested opinions. To Mr. Hanby and such, who condescended to lounge much about him, he was civil and respectful ; but he could hardly be brought to speak upon the topics with which every one was then tormented ; he had a strange way of parrying the sword of controversial theo-

logy; seemed to think of late that not only all the world, but his own village, was become a stage, and the men and women merely players; for all that was going on never troubled him, but seemed only to give him amusement. Lately he had become from necessity a sort of general listener; and even when Mr. Hanby or Mr. Allmouth made, as the sportsmen say, a set at him, he had an odd way of turning to them his profile only, so that while the side of his face which they could see seemed serious enough, the other side, if they could have seen it, would have shown them a scarcely suppressed disposition to contemptuous risibility.

But David had observed too much of party, to expect to escape blameless, with any conceivable prudence, while he tried to remain neuter, or even in so far as he offered to maintain the moderate opinions of Mr. Oxford, whom he would on no account forsake. Mr. Allmouth began with little reserve to call him a man who

had no religion, if not a dangerous and cunning scoffer at the word ; and Mr. Hanby, moved to indignation, and hating him, for presuming to reject his friendship and patronage, and for seeming to see through his motives, soon hinted broadly his shrewd suspicion that David was a rank Socinian, or worse ; nay, even that he could be nothing but an infidel, or perhaps atheist, at the bottom—(so much for Mr. Oxford's cold moral doctrine): and being mortified and chagrined at his plans being penetrated, and perhaps opposed, by a paltry bookseller, he determined within himself, for his own work's sake, and that of " the good cause," to frighten him into proselytism when all things were ripe, or to work his ruin.

These circumstances, however, presented a body of difficulties such as would have appalled a man of less courage and fewer talents than belonged to Mr. Hanby. But they, as it turned out, only stimulated him to greater exertions and deeper manœuvres ; which showed an innate

knowledge of the weakest and worst side of human character, and a just confidence built upon it of in due time obtaining a numerical superiority. Mr. Hanby knowing the world, and aware that Providence condescends to work by human means, and the instrumentality of *unworthy* earthen vessels, in the great work of man's conversion, decided upon opening the campaign by measures of the greatest vigour, and invaded the peaceful province of David Groom and other villagers by two acts of astounding temerity.

He first introduced and planted in the village a dependent, in the shape of a pious attorney ; a man out of the lowest class of the people and of his profession, whom in public his patron called friend, but whom in private he trampled upon and made familiar with alternately, according as his interest or his humour might dictate. This useful person understanding what was what, found his duty to consist in being ready in the quarrels and intrigues of his patron in the re-

cruiting service of the new sect and chapel, extending his (the patron's) influence by the terrors of the law when necessary, or being his scape-goat when it might not be pleasant that an excellent man should be spoken against; and also making and carrying on quarrels and intrigues of his own, if possible; for this was all in the way of business, and money must be made.

The next step Mr. Hanby took was, when he saw that he must oust Mr. Groom if possible, to invite into the village a broken-down printer, calling himself a bookseller, poor and pliable, who, with the necessary furnishing of a printing-press (a curious machine, never before seen in Oldwood), an assortment of types, &c. for the throwing off of religious matter in time of need, and a "body of divinity," almost the size of a year's bedding for the great man's riding-horse, chiefly in the shape of cheap pamphlets for the dissemination of *religion*, threatened to work such a further change, and to impart such a

measure of knowledge, as never poor village before was blessed with.

These great plans having been duly executed, Mr. Hanby began to contemplate the result with confident satisfaction, and to see in all that he had done, and should do, nothing but the judicious-wisdom and pious zeal of the man who is determined to do good in his generation. He reflected with pleasure upon the service he was doing to religion, and to the lower orders, by introducing a preacher more suitable to their spiritual wants than either Mr. Oxford or Mr. Allmouth; and thought that if the *end* was praiseworthy, some latitude might be granted in the use of *means*, from the admitted frailty of human nature.

Besides the attorney and the poor tract-man, his immediate dependents, as well as several others in the village and neighbourhood, Mr. Hanby had wriggled himself into the acquaintance of his neighbour sir Hugh Salvage, an aged knight, who, as a friend of the late pro-

prietor, at present occupied as tenant the romantic and extensive property of Clynch Castle; and having thus laid his train as judiciously as possible, the day arrived for his first step in the formation and patronage of a village library.

CHAPTER XI.

A GRAND MEETING ABOUT RELIGION.

GREAT was the bustle, and highly wrought the curiosity, at and round the Clynch Arms, on the morning of the meeting. The carriages of Mr. Hanby and sir Hugh, his neighbour, were the first to arrive; next came that of Mr. Hallam, who had of late got attached to Mr. Allmouth; and the large room was soon nearly filled with the inferior personages of the neighbourhood. The London director soon commenced operations, by proposing that his friend sir Hugh be called to the chair, while the clergyman of the village, Mr. Groom, and some others arrived; and while the chairman, who was very deaf, was stammering out the object of the meeting, a bustle took place, as Mr. Orton, his two

sons, Mr. Jarman, and Mr. Stavely entered the room. There was something laughable in the prompting which Mr. Hanby was obliged most awkwardly to give to the old-womanish knight, who by reason of his deafness was necessarily spoken to in a stage-whisper, which was perfectly audible to the whole company ; but at length the object of the meeting having been again stated, the London director got up to make a speech.

Heaven forbid that we should obstinately continue to afflict the patient reader with more of this sort of thing. We shall therefore only say that, after a "neat speech," which was very like a bad sermon, Mr. Hanby ended by proposing a resolution to establish a *religious* library in Oldwood, for the use of the inhabitants of the village and neighbourhood, for the great purpose of promoting the knowledge of pure and evangelical religion, which was sadly wanted for the stirring up of the consciences of the men of Old-

wood, and which would be of more real benefit to their benighted souls than gold, or rubies, or any such dross.

Mr. Hallam, who sat near the chair, to the surprise of the Orton Hall party, rose and seconded the resolution.

Next uprose Mr. Strip, the new attorney, who eulogized Mr. Hanby to the skies, for thinking of a scheme so full of piety and benevolence; praised the gospel, and showed clearly what obligations religion was under to such excellent characters as his patron; and now, as the business of the meeting was likely to be settled so happily, he begged, for the edification as well as information of the company, and for the warming of their zeal, to read a list of the works with which it was proposed to lay the foundation of the forthcoming library. Having read such a list as, with a few exceptions, would delight the ears of any speculator in theological waste paper, he sat down, quite pleased with his day's work.

The rev. Mr. Allmouth next stood up, and in an electrifying speech, with which we do not choose to trouble the reader, eulogized the object of the meeting, and the books, and the people, and particularly himself, who had been the great means (under Providence) of stirring up the whole business.

"I see," whispered Mr. Orton to those around him, "that this is a regularly concerted business, and arises out of a sectarian cabal, as we suspected. I think it beneath me to speak among these people, and yet it is pitiful that they should go on without a word of opposition. And there sits poor Mr. Oxford, seemingly entirely abstracted."

"I am sorry we have got such a neighbour as that Hanby appears to be," said Mr. Stavely. "I should like to mortify the vulgar presumption of him, if pride would allow me."

"If you attempt to say any thing, however obviously just, in opposition to him or his plans,

it will be called opposition to religion, and he will have the whole country stirred up against you," said Mr. Jarman. "You are a young man, and don't know the danger of opposing hypocrisy, nor the rancour of religious hate."

"I don't think, however, that we are doing our duty, in sitting silent while this business passes," said Mr. Orton; "let us either say something or walk away. We at least ought not to countenance them."

"If my father rise, he will work himself into a passion," whispered Mr. Orton's eldest son, "and we are too young to speak before these knowing ones: besides, for my own part, I have not learned a word of cant. I think, Mr. Jarman, you are fittest to talk to them yourself."

"*Do*, Mr. Jarman, say something," said Stavelly; "up sir, do!"

"Will you then promise, Mr. Stavelly, to second me in whatever amendment I may propose?"

You are a large proprietor in the neighbourhood, and for my own part I disdain to be in fear of them. What do you say?"

"I will, sir, on my honour," answered Stavely.

Mr. Hanby had been watching the looks of the Orton Hall party with much anxiety, for some time, and had indulged hopes that they would at least approve his zeal, and perhaps might second his plans, and even invite him to their acquaintance. When Mr. Jarman therefore rose, and all eyes were of course upon him, the director watched him with strong anxiety, while a general whisper ran through the room. A dry smile, however, moved the muscles of his face, which prepared his friends for some odd proposal, and which Mr. Hanby regarded with alarm.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, after a short suspense, "I am a stranger in this neighbourhood, and have no right, perhaps, to take any part in

the proceedings of this meeting, excepting on behalf of the friends who sit near me; yet, as the resolution moved involves an experiment upon the minds of the lower classes pretty general throughout the empire in the present day, which is, I think, of at least a questionable nature, in order to afford time in the present opportunity for discussion, and to give you a fair choice of evils, I beg to move, in this meeting, an amendment to the following purport:—That a library be forthwith formed in Oldwood, for the instruction of the people in the valuable knowledge of Scotch and German METAPHYSICS, to consist of all the rare books on these interesting branches; beginning, for example, with Baxter on the Nature of the Human Soul, or King on the Origin of Evil; and, by way of exercise, perhaps the Dialogue of Hylas and Philonus on the Existence of Matter; and ending with the indispensably useful philosophy of Kant; and that this meeting do earnestly recommend to the peasantry

to drink no ale, or indulge in other carnal superfluity, until, by penny-a-week contributions, &c. these precious books may be purchased, and their contents anxiously discussed."

"I have the honour of seconding my friend's amendment," said Mr. Stavely, standing up, with well-affected gravity.

The whole room was instantly in a buzz of amazement and confusion.

"What does the gentleman say about cant?" inquired the deaf chairman: "perhaps he will be so obliging as to speak *up*! We are quite agreed that there is no philosophy in cant, and I am proud to hear that this excellent resolution is so respectably moved and seconded. It is delightful to observe so many honourable gentlemen putting their hands to the good work. As many as are of opinion that this resolution shall——"

"Mr. Chairman! sir Hugh! Mr. Chairman! I beg pardon," cried Mr. Hanby, blowing with

accumulated surprise and mortification: “but perhaps the mover of the resolution will hand a copy of it to the secretary of the meeting, that it may be read distinctly, or at least repeat it again, that all present may hear it; and as it is usual in moving a resolution to enter in some degree upon the reasons for it, perhaps the gentleman will——”

“Make a speech!” cried some one, taking the words out of the director’s mouth, who was taken so much by surprise that he began to stammer.

“A speech! a speech!” shouted several voices out of the crowd of those who attend such meetings for mere amusement.

Mr. Jarman again rose, and, with a good-humoured but somewhat sarcastic smile, spoke as follows:

“Much praise is, no doubt, due to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other movers and contrivers of the object of the present meeting, for your

great benevolence towards the highly favoured persons for whose sole good you have been at the trouble of assembling yourselves this day; not for the discussion of any scheme for increasing their worldly substance, or for teaching them earthly wisdom, or for promoting their comfort and contentment in this perishing life, or any such grovelling purposes; but for the high and lofty object of imparting to them, by means of good books, such inward light and such penetrating knowledge of things ‘not seen,’ as the learned and wise of ancient and modern times never could pretend to.

“ Now, as this illumination is, as you say, after all, so easily attained by the most ignorant babe, through the astonishingly simple means of active faith, together with constantly searching into the hidden meaning of spiritual things, and is so sure and certain in itself (at least for the time being), and withal so useful when attained, that all the researches of the wisest of men are

set aside and scorned by it; and further, as it never has yet been in the power of man, by any contrivance since the world began, to graft so suddenly and so surely such rare knowledge upon such pure ignorance by any other means; without doubt, it would be a sore pity to withhold from the poor such inestimable blessings, when a few pounds of money, laid out in a certain species of religious printed paper, would, as you say, work such wonders.

“ But, gentlemen, let us discuss this business in plain language. You are, I perceive, sensible of the value, for your purpose, of primitive ignorance and simplicity; as upon it you can the more easily work, in infusing such notions, under the name of religious knowledge, as shall effectually choke the growth of all other knowledge, in this inquisitive age; shall banish religion as such, and subvert plain moral principle; shall corrupt honest simplicity of character, and withdraw popular regard from our national

church, and every institution of our country which tends to uphold these, and which is calculated to preserve a wise moderation and some uniformity of character to religious opinion in society. You see the beauty of religious extremes, the good sense of popular excitement and bigoted zeal, the national glory and domestic peace of hair-splitting jarring in religious opinion with sects multiplying and sub-dividing *ad infinitum*.

“ Aware how much easier it is to obtain influence over the ignorant by means of some extravagance under the notion of religion, than by any thing in the shape of reason or good sense; you are naturally anxious to awaken the latent fanaticism which is in most men, by fiery preaching and theological mystification, suitable to minds uncultivated, and of course superstitious; and when you have banished the religion of nature, of the sacred writings to which it is in conformity, of our national church, and of common

sense, and set men by the ears in contention for absurdity, then demagogues will flourish and reap a large harvest, and enthusiastic and imaginative people will be duly crazed, and argue to the changes of the moon.

“ Now, admitting fully the efficacy of the means you propose, for banishing religion, as I said, and frightening off common sense, her best friend, and for planting self-deception, hypocritical cunning, and knavish casuistry, and sordid cant, in the place of natural honesty and transparency of character; still I have to object to your plan, that it is not at all new in the history of the world; various contrivances more original have been proposed or tried for subverting or bringing into disrepute the christian religion; most of them taking their root in what is called freedom of opinion, inquiry, and discussion, by the help of suitable *explainers* and leaders; meaning much the same as that the town tailor ought meritoriously to set himself to

discuss the doctrine of the conic sections; the town crier to expound ethics in the gates of the city (for wisdom ought no doubt to cry aloud in the entry of the streets); or that the baker should with every freedom make deep inquiry into the infinite divisibility of matter, the amalgamation of heterogeneous atoms, and the manner in which differential substances may be made to resemble each other.

“ But I fear that it would ultimately be found, that the tailor’s knowledge of conic sections might be worth very little, *as knowledge*, while he would be sure to turn it to account in the cheating of his customers by the admeasurement of the sections of their cloth, and in the invention of plausible reasons for making so laudable a use of his knowledge: the town crier could not be expected, notwithstanding that a merit would be made of it, to be very deeply skilled in ethics; yet his crying them in your ears might not always be strictly in season; according to the

opinion of Dr. Johnson, that although wisdom ought no doubt to cry aloud when she had any thing very good to say, yet it was often just as well that she should hold her tongue: and as for the baker, his deep investigation of the monades, divisibility, and amalgamation, whatever it *prevented* him from knowing, would be sure to teach him the best manner of poisoning us in our bread, if he was of the general teachable spirit; and of justifying it when done, by that sort of *diarrhæa verborum* which is so ready at hand for those who possess neither knowledge nor capacity.

“ I say, admitting fully the efficacy of the means you propose for abolishing Christianity, and undermining any established church for the support of something like sensible religion, yet I humbly think, gentlemen, that you might play at shuttlecock with the ignorant class, and acquire great fame and influence by a different plan; although I may expect much obloquy for

taking the part of poor abused religion, and am much of opinion with a certain satirical dean, ‘that although,’ to use his own words, ‘*it may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent to argue against the abolishing of Christianity at a juncture when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point, as we cannot but allow from their actions, their discourses, and their writings; nevertheless, that the abolishing of Christianity in England may, as things now stand, be attended with some inconveniences, and perhaps not produce those many good effects proposed thereby.*’* I therefore would submit to your good sense and experience, that some other mode may be thought of for the great and important ends you have in view.

“Now, the plan I have proposed in my amendment would avoid some of the evils of yours, and would be perhaps as efficacious for

* Swift’s argument against the abolishing of Christianity.

a time ; and having the merit of being less hackneyed than yours, would bring greater glory to its movers and promoters. It is much on a par with your own in principle. You judge rightly, that if a rapid and exciting impression is to be made upon the minds of the lower orders, in any matter aside from their mere every-day interests, or rather upon the ignorant and simple out of all the classes, the subject employed must either come from some admitted authority, which none shall think of questioning, or be one that is unintelligible, either in itself or by the ingenuity of wire-drawing writers on it ; or it must run into a region far beyond the reach of human knowledge or experience, where the reason and attainments of the human mind cannot act with the least success, and so leave the greater room for *faith*, which will now come in and take up with implicitness, according to the indolence and incapacity of the individual, what the reasoning faculty would, if properly taught, refuse ; and all

this for the exercise of the talents of those who are to make the impression, who well know how to handle properly such a subject. Now the subject I have mentioned possesses great advantages in these particulars, as I shall proceed to show, for——”

“ Mr. Chairman! sir Hugh!” interrupted Mr. Hanby, rising in great wrath; “ I beg, sir! I say, sir! is this meeting, and every thing sacred and holy, to be turned into ridicule in this manner, sir? I move——”

“ Spoke! spoke! no interruption! Hear him out!” shouted several voices.

“ Certainly: no interruption, if you please. I shall not suffer any confusion while I occupy this chair,” said the deaf president, determined to uphold his dignity in his high office; although he was at a loss to know what all this confusion meant, for he had not heard one distinct sentence that had been uttered. “ I beg you will proceed, sir,” he added, addressing Mr. Jarman,

with dignified complacency. "I am sure this meeting is highly indebted to you for your eloquent speech and efficient support, and——"

"Sir Hugh! sir Chairman! you are under a mistake: you have not heard a word: you are——" and Mr. Hanby seemed in torture.

"Sir," said Mr. Stavely with dignity, having stood up during the confusion, and now looking to Mr. Hanby, "as the chairman is unfortunately unable to hear what is said, I am obliged to address myself to *you*, and to request that you may not take upon yourself to interrupt the speaker, as I conceive the gentlemen present have not met to-day merely to second your views."

A buzz of applause followed this, through great part of the room.

"Sir, you are a ——!" roared Mr. Hanby, losing all command of himself from passion.

"Shame! shame!" cried several voices.

"I insist, sir," added Stavely, "that my friend may be heard."

The director returned him a look, as if he could have shot him, and then sat down.

“We are all met in the good cause,” said Mr. Jarman, good-humouredly: “let us not lose our tempers.

“Having shown you how much my plan is on a par with your own in its principle, I proceed to explain to you the superior advantages, in many important particulars, of applying to it instead of to yours. First, as the Scotch are well known to be a people who are famous for a propensity to reasoning, from even the period almost when their nails begin to grow, the earlier metaphysics of such a people, even when they have not taken a religious direction, but are taken up with an acute controversy in favour of the small or the big end of an egg, or whether the moon be made of green cheese or no, must surely furnish most suitable exercises, *à priori*, for training the minds of our most thinking people, and for teaching them what Johnson calls *ratiocination*, ac-

cording to the measure of their ignorance. And as for the metaphysical systems of our neighbours the Germans, what species of mystic knowledge, or form of absurd doctrine, can be more suitable for the lower class of any people, or fitter, excepting the religious systems of the day, for operating upon ignorance and the unfurnished imagination? or with what could a class of our saints and sectarians more effectually banish rational religion, candour, truth, and serious morals, from among a people constantly driven hither and thither by self-constituted expounders of what is truth?

“ I admit fully the efficacy of the old mode of stifling the incipient struggles of rationality, whereby the demagogues of the day, by constantly heating the minds of the harassed people with subjects and dogmas to which they must surrender up what few powers of judging they possess, overrun the land with enthusiasts; or if

any be made of arguing stuff, like the Scotch, by setting them to reason through the mist, until the poor fools reason themselves out, of all religion and into justified libertinism and hypocrisy, or into a madhouse. But as I am no Quixote, to set myself up for new-making the world, and as the torrent of evangelizing and fanaticism is too wide and rapid for men of sense to attempt to stem, I merely propose to bring about the same *ends* by different *means*. I propose to give persons of imagination and romance, but who are, from their situation and opportunities, necessarily ignorant, a strong solution of German metaphysics, with a reasonable allowance of miracles, dreams, and visions, from some place or time sufficiently distant, by which I would make my enthusiasts: and as for my argument-men, I think I could make them as crazy, and cause them to tear each other's eyes out with as much fury of controversy, by plying them hard with certain

portions of Scotch metaphysics, as the hypocrites to be furnished out of both of those classes, and who would make money of each, could desire.

“ Now, this is no Bobadil scheme, gentlemen, but perfectly practicable ; for I need not tell men of your experience, that there is nothing easier than to produce a given quantity of craziness and zeal on behalf of it, if the subject be sufficiently remote and unintelligible, as a due number of the ignorant among the rich and influential will always be ready to countenance and partake of the mania. But the superiority of my plan is especially this, that, as Scotch metaphysics, or any other debatable subject, does not (from the provisions of public law, or the customs of society) stand in the same circumstances as religion, *less money could be made by taking a side in it*. Hence it would be less a subject of speculation by those who grow rich upon particular sets of opinions : so that, gentlemen, religion and morality may be banished, and the lower

classes be instructed, to the forfeiting of their little understanding, at a much cheaper rate and by a simpler mode than by any quantity of printed tracts and controversial or speculative divinity, such as you propose ; and you would gather immortal laurels by setting up this new sect."

Mr. Hanby darted a look of angry astonishment at Mr. Allmouth once or twice during this speech, and wondered that he did not, in pure zeal for divine truth, interrupt and put down such profane scoffing at every thing sacred ; but, however strong the zeal of the reverend gentleman for his own sort of religion, his hatred of those who opposed his opinions or circumvented his pious plans was as usual much stronger ; and as Mr. Hanby had often done the former, and, by taking the lead and the credit to himself of the present day's work, was effectually doing the latter, Mr. Allmouth deeply enjoyed Mr. Jarman's speech and the torture of the puffy director, who could bear it no longer, but, starting

up and looking round with suppressed wrath, interrupted the speaker, in a sanctimonious tone, with—

“Mr. Chairman! gentlemen! I say, I cannot—I cannot, in accordance with my duty and my conscience, sit still to listen to any man, be he infidel or atheist, who, sitting in the seat of the scorner, chooses to interrupt the pious intentions of conscientious and worthy Christians, and to cast ridicule upon the labours of the blessed divines who have thrown such light upon the doctrines of the Bible, by comparing their immortal works to Scotch metaphysics.

“I say, sir, every man who is impressed with true religion, and sees the good that is doing by it throughout Christendom, ought to step forward and put down by every possible means the spirit of opposition to real vital godliness, and that incessant search after truth which is the bounden duty of every man, from the lowest to the highest; and, sir, I am sorry to say, that I can

trace this spirit to certain men whom the church herself harbours in her bosom—to some men bearing the name of ministers of religion, who, instead of the doctrines so consoling to sinners of the worst kind, feed the people with the dry bread of carnal morality and cold duty, if not with rank Arminianism. Sir, I trace the scandalous opposition to true religion this day to the unsound doctrines of the church of England, as taught by individuals in this very room—individuals, sir, who unblushingly oppose evangelical godliness! unblushingly subvert the minds of the people into Erastianism, Laodiceanism, and even Socinianism!”—(and he thumped the table until it rang in the good cause)—“and one who is strongly to be suspected (my blood runs cold when I think of it!) of nothing short of infidelity or atheism itself! Sir, such men ought to be driven—they ought to——”

A general hubbub here arose: some cried “Question! question!” some cried “Shame!” others

stood up to speechify ; but in most a strong dissatisfaction was manifested ; not so much at the charge of infidelity and atheism against the venerable clergyman, (for the *love* of common minds to religious absurdity, as it waxes stronger and stronger, is well proportioned by *hate* to the abettors of common sense and moderation) as that that charge should be made by Mr. Hanby ; for most had so much zeal of their own, that they did not like to see it monopolized by this bullying pursy stranger, whose manner was a perfect contrast to the mild forbearing conduct of the old clergyman.

At length the white head of David Groom, the bookseller, was observed above the people. As he rose with the purpose to speak, his eye kindled in a manner very unusual to his known placid disposition. Whatever opinions were held regarding his religion, the strong sense and kindly disposition of the ancient man of books had obtained him an ascendancy over the people, which

even the new clergyman could not generally command, and, in a few moments, all was silence to hear what Mr. Groom had to say.

“ I had little expectation,” he said, “ of letting my voice be heard by this assembly ; but the very idea of the attack just made upon the worthy clergyman, who has laboured forty years in this village, being, in the present confusion of plans and opinions, left unrebuted, impels *me* to raise my feeble voice in the midst of this unhappy tumult, to say, with all deference to my superiors, that I cannot sit with patience and allow such an attack to be made by a stranger upon a venerable and, I will say, highly talented clergyman, without expressing my sincere sorrow that such unwarrantable language should ever have been uttered, and my strong conviction, after twenty years’ experience of that venerable gentleman’s religious teaching, that he merits a different character and reward from that which has most unjustly been given to him, and how opposite

his sentiments are from those most uncandidly imputed to him by the last speaker. Having said this much, my object in standing up to be heard is finished, as I mean not to notice the evident object of this meeting; but to add further, from my experience, that had no other sentiments and systems been introduced than those taught by our excellent original pastor, and by the majority of the teachers belonging to our excellent church, such scenes as the present, and such as have, within the last twelve months, divided and harassed all classes, would never have been known in Oldwood."

At this public testimony in favour of doctrines or sentiments which he had laboured so hard to impugn and render odious, delivered by a man so much looked up to as Mr. Groom, the rev. Mr. Allmouth felt serious alarm, and now thought it better to make common cause with his religious rival, the director, than be beaten, in the face of the people, into any thing like approbation of

the man and his opinions whom he had succeeded in supplanting to so great an extent. He started up, therefore ; and, having now an opportunity of giving vent to the grudge that he also entertained towards the harmless bookseller, said, with the most imposing looks of sanctity and zeal for the real sort of religion, “ that while he disapproved of pointed allusion to particular individuals, he could not but observe upon the gross ignorance of the last speaker, who presumed to eulogize that upon which he was evidently incompetent to give an opinion, being, as might easily be seen, in the gall of bitterness himself, and utter blindness ; so, how could it be supposed that he should see what has in all ages been hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes ? In short,” he said, “ that the last speaker, by praising in his ignorance that system of infidel morality and spiritual blindness (which he, Mr. Allmouth, had been the humble instrument, in the hands of a merciful Providence, of banishing, by the in-

roduction of vital godliness), gave the most scriptural testimony against it himself; for, if there was any one thing clearer than another in the divine word, it was, that there would not be a day's peace where true Christianity was; for the Founder himself declared, that it was a mistake to suppose he came to send peace on the earth, for he 'did not come to send peace, but a sword;' that, instead of that Laodicean peace (which those poor blind wretches who have nothing but their worldly knowledge to recommend them constantly advocated) being the effect of evangelical religion, it is expressly said, that the genuine effects of it would be variance and contention. So let us not blink this question," he added, "nor fear to push this doctrine to its legitimate conclusion, so long as we have the sure word of Scripture to bear us out; for, as it is evident that true Christianity is in direct opposition to the wisdom of this world, so I may confidently affirm, agreeably to the words of Scripture, and the nature of things, that the

more true religion flourishes and makes way in the world, the more will the contrary of peace take place; the more will man be turned against man; opposition of truth struggling fiercely with error; everlasting contention between the carnal and the spiritual; the powers of darkness with the children of light; the new man with the man of sin; that prince of the power of the air, that spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, which, for the setting forth of the glory of God, shall always work, in eternal battle with the Divine Spirit that strives in the children of adoption: so that, as godliness increases, variance within doors and without shall increase and aggravate; warfare shall reinforce warfare; strife accumulate on strife; the two-edged sword of the Lord shall go forth smiting the wicked, hip and thigh, until his purposes of *mercy* are accomplished over the whole earth, and, like the appalling war that once agitated heaven, millions and millions be driven forth to endless horrors!?"

Here several persons appeared to wish to speak, as the rev. Mr. Allmouth, having got into his usual strain of eloquence, paused to take in breath. Among others, the rev. Mr. Oxford stood up, in evident agitation, and, after a brief pause, said,

“I rise, Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, merely to say, that however my feelings of self-respect might induce me to keep silent on this occasion, yet as a clergyman of the church of England, and a humble representative of the dignified religious order established by the laws of my country, as a teacher of rational religion and morals, and a member of society, I feel it my duty publicly to protest against the sentiments uttered by the gentleman who has just finished his extraordinary speech, and to declare my conviction that they are contrary to the spirit of our holy faith, contrary to common sense and reason, subversive of public morals, and even the peace of the country, and are the very essence of that sectarian and

subdividing spirit which, if not checked at least by general good sense and public opinion, will turn religion itself into a name of ridicule with thinking men, and turn our common people into ranting fanatics, or mouthing abettors of a libertine and vulgar scepticism.

“ With respect to the ostensible object of this meeting, I shall only take this opportunity of saying that, after long experience, both in my own case, and as a teacher of others, I disapprove entirely of establishing a so-called religious library in this village, or in any form drawing simple minds, without general and even considerable previous knowledge, to the much controverted, the abstract, the highly metaphysical and profound doctrines, and the too daring inquiries and dogmas connected with theology. I consider, that complexity in theology has in all ages been but the pedestal of human vanity, or the engine of priestcraft, and complexity in morals but the casuistry of deceit, and the cloak, if not the badge,

of hypocrisy. For the folly of the scheme of some gentlemen present, they may expect the derision of every man of sense; and in fact it has just been ridiculed, by a gentleman at the other end of the room, with a talent and a happiness of illustration, making it so perfectly contemptible, as to cover this very meeting with shame for the shallowness of its plan, and the suspiciousness of its wretched and, I hope, abortive attempt."

The most zealous present seemed paralyzed by the effect which the dignified and manly manner in which this short and energetic protest was delivered by the venerable clergyman, evidently had upon the assembly. A pause of indecision took place, during which Mr. Allmouth, rallying like a prize-fighter, stood up with a furious look, and taking up a Bible in his right hand, held it menacingly out, and offered battle by vociferating—

"Answer me with Scripture, sir! answer me with Scripture! Where is your reference to this book, sir? What does *it* say on your side? But

you are silent as a pillar of salt, when brought to the test of God's word. You cry 'peace, peace, when there is no peace:' and your friends at the other end of the room would disappoint the thirsty souls of this lacking people, and give them human knowledge, and teach them empty morals. I tell you, the church of England neglects her own thirty-nine articles; they are gone out of fashion. But I rejoice that there are men in the land who will revive them again, and the spirit of those who penned them: and we will have none of your Laodicean peace; we shall have a kindling of zeal in the land, and the sword of the Lord shall go forth conquering and to conquer, and the sneering opponents of the Scriptures of truth shall——"

How long the excellent ones present at this meeting might have enjoyed the reverend preacher's characteristic speech, it is not easy to say; but just at this period an over-crowded form tumbled with a great noise, and caused

much confusion; a device, as was evident to many, of the wicked one, to disappoint the pious intentions of the people of the Lord then assembled. Fearing any fresh disaster, and hoping that things had now taken a turn in his favour, Mr. Hanby, as soon as the confusion began to subside, stood up, and, addressing the president, said,

“ Mr. Chairman, a resolution has been proposed to this meeting, and duly seconded: may I beg you will put the question?”

“ Eh?—what is it you say, sir?” said sir Hugh, placing his hand behind his most tractable ear, to catch the words.

“ Put the question, sir!” cried the director, furiously.

“ I propose, as an amendment, that this matter be adjourned for twelve months,” said Louis Stavely, rising to depart.

“ I withdraw my former proposal, and second the amendment,” said Mr. Jarman; “ it will take

a year and a day, at least, to bring these gentlemen to reason and good temper ;” and so saying the Orton Hall party, and the greater number present, withdrew.

Mr. Allmouth was still on his legs, and looked aghast with astonishment as the room gradually cleared. Mr. Hanby sat indulging the most vengeful thoughts against the whole party from Orton Hall, and particularly Mr. Stavely, to whom principally he deemed himself indebted for this day’s defeat and severe mortification ; while the knight who nominally presided inquired in vain of the abstracted director and clergyman if the meeting was over, and waited with some impatience to know what he was next to do, and for a vote of thanks for his efficient conduct in the chair.

But, though disappointed and mortified, the London director had too much city tact and experience of such meetings to let himself and the good cause down at this point ; so rallying the

few clodhoppers and women that remained, by a pious but lamentable speech upon the backsliding of the times, and the opposition of ungodly men to every thing that was good, concluded by the consoling reflection, that the Almighty, who attentively watched their proceedings, had permitted this partial defeat of their plans, which were contrived solely for His glory, merely to try the faith and perseverance of his saints, who must expect nothing but persecution in this howling wilderness; but God would no doubt bring about good by means of evil, which they were all aware was his general mode of working.

These excellent sentiments being most agreeable to the majority of those now present, the question of a religious library was again put, and carried by acclamation; the minutes being duly recorded by Mr. Strip, the attorney, who was made secretary; and a subscription was entered into by the director, the chairman, Mr. Allmouth, Mr. Hal-

lam, and a few others among the common people, whom the busy director and his attorney cajoled out of their half-crowns in the cause of piety; the zealous director trusting to "future plans and individual exertions" for completing the funds to carry on this great work.

The company then rose to separate, which they were now enabled to do in the fulness of piety and peace: the gentlemen present, as well as the obsequious attorney, shaking hands with and addressing the lowest of the people present, and their wives; by which they made these persons their zealous friends and partisans, and exhibited clearly to them and all the world examples of the beauteous humility of true piety, and the power of real evangelical religion in subduing the natural pride of the human heart.

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